

COSTUME IN THE COMEDIES OF ARISTOPHANES



Gwendolyn Compton-Engle

COSTUME IN THE COMEDIES OF ARISTOPHANES

This book offers an interpretation of the handling of costume in the plays of the fifth-century comic poet Aristophanes. Drawing on both textual and material evidence from the fifth- and fourth-century Greek world, it examines three layers of costume: the bodysuit worn by the actors, the characters' clothes, and the additional layering of disguise. A chapter is also devoted to the inventive costumes of the comic chorus. Going beyond describing what costumes looked like, the book focuses instead on the dynamics of costume as it is manipulated by characters in the performance of plays. The book argues that costume is used competitively, as characters handle each other's costumes and poets vie for status using costume. This argument is informed by performance studies and by analyses of gender and the body.

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John Carroll University



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To Tron and Mia

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AttiLinc</i>	<i>Atti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Classical World</i>
<i>GR</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>ICS</i>	<i>Illinois Classical Studies</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>JDAI</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der deutschen archäologischen Instituts</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>LCS</i>	A. D. Trendall, <i>The Red-Figured Vases of Lucania, Campania, and Sicily</i> . Oxford, 1967.
<i>LSJ</i>	H. S. Jones and R. MacKenzie, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. Oxford, 1940.
<i>MMC</i> ³	T. B. L. Webster and J. R. Green, <i>Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy</i> . 3rd ed. London, 1978.
<i>MNC</i> ³	T. B. L. Webster, J. R. Green, and A. Seeberg, <i>Monuments Illustrating New Comedy</i> . 3rd ed. London, 1995.
<i>OJA</i>	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>PA</i>	J. Kirchner, <i>Prosopographia Attica</i> . Berlin, 1901–3; reprint, Chicago, 1981.
<i>PCG</i>	R. Kassel and C. Austin, eds., <i>Poetae Comici Graeci</i> . Berlin and New York, 1983–.
<i>PCPS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
<i>PhV</i> ²	A. D. Trendall, <i>Phlyax Vases</i> . 2nd ed. London, 1967.
<i>RhM</i>	<i>Rheinisches Museum</i>
<i>RivFil</i>	<i>Rivista di filologia e d'istruzione classica</i>

<i>RVAp</i>	A. D. Trendall and A. Cambitoglou, <i>The Red-Figured Vases of Apulia</i> . Oxford, 1978–.
<i>RVP</i>	A. D. Trendall, <i>The Red-Figured Vases of Paestum</i> . London, 1987.
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TrGF</i>	B. Snell, R. Kannicht, and S. L. Radt, eds., <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> . Göttingen, 1971–2009.
<i>YCS</i>	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the plays of Aristophanes are from the 2007 Oxford edition by N. G. Wilson, and all comic fragments are from *PCG*. Ancient authors and works are abbreviated as in *LSJ*, except for the plays of Aristophanes, for which I have used abbreviated English rather than Latinized titles (most notably *Ass.*, not *Eccl.*, for *Assemblywomen*). All translations are my own. All dates are B.C.E. unless otherwise indicated.

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ONE

INTRODUCTION: COMIC COSTUME IN ACTION

Aristophanic comedy is extraordinarily rich in costume effects, from fantastic animal costumes to the workaday tunic and shoes, from stolen cloaks to transvestite disguises. This book aims to examine comic costume in action, tracing the dynamics of costume within whole plays, the relationship of costume to theme, and the meanings of comic costume within its cultural and performance contexts. Imagine that one character wears another's cloak. My interest lies not so much in the cloak's color or size or material, but whether the cloak was given freely, exchanged, or stolen from someone's body, what the recipient will do with it, and how that action fits into any patterns of dressing and stripping within the play. Costume is an underappreciated weapon in the comic poet's arsenal, often deployed for specific theatrical and thematic purposes. Its use in comic performances also reflects cultural assumptions about power, the body, status, and mimesis, so these issues, too, are integral to the project.

INFLUENCES AND APPROACH

The starting point for any work on costume in Athenian Old Comedy is L. M. Stone's *Costume in Aristophanic Comedy*, which has become the standard reference work on the topic. Stone's careful collection and judicious interpretation of the evidence for comic costume has been supplemented by Alan Hughes's article that reexamines the components of Old and Middle Comedy costume

with particular emphasis on the archaeological evidence.¹ Further isolated nuggets of information about costume can be found in many of the existing commentaries on Aristophanes. This book does not aim to function as a reference work, or to describe exactly what the costumes looked like at any given moment of every Aristophanes play, or to solve the many small problems of costume in individual scenes. Rather, I hope to incorporate important developments in performance studies, gender studies, and iconographic evidence for Greek comedy into an interpretation of the functions of costume within whole plays of Aristophanes and within Greek culture.

This study takes much of its inspiration from the developments in performance studies over the past several decades. Scholars such as Oliver Taplin, David Wiles, C. W. Marshall, Niall Slater, Rush Rehm, Martin Revermann, and Alan Hughes have raised our consciousness of the performative aspects of ancient drama, which was meant to be experienced as live theater, not printed words on a page.² Thanks to their efforts, such aspects of ancient Greek theatrical performance as entrances and exits, blocking, stage space, mask, and gesture have been examined. Studies of the actor in antiquity have helped us to understand the place of actors and acting styles within ancient Greek society.³ Within performance-based studies on Greek comedy, though, costume has received only spotty treatment. Two recent books on the performance of Old Comedy, those by Revermann and Hughes, do address some issues of costuming, but each devotes only a small proportion of his book to the workings of costume.⁴ Where costume has been discussed at greater length has been in connection with disguise and the “metatheatrical” plays-within-plays that Aristophanes sometimes offers his audience.⁵ Yet disguises are but a fraction of the costume activity that occurs in a typical play by Aristophanes. One of the goals of this book is to reconceive disguise as the top layer in a whole set of garments worn by the actor and to examine its workings as part of that multilayered system.

A second set of influences in this book is the scholarship on the visual aspects of Greek drama, particularly as evidenced in material remains such as vase painting and terracotta figurines. Study of archaeological evidence for drama has been conducted for more than a century and was used to good effect in Stone’s book on comic costume.⁶ Yet recent finds and fresh analyses by such scholars as J. R. Green, Oliver Taplin, Margot Schmidt, Helene Foley, Eric Csapo, and Alan Hughes have reopened exciting connections between ancient drama and the visual arts.⁷ To study the costuming of Old Comedy now requires a careful consideration of fourth-century vase paintings that originate in southern Italy, as well as earlier Attic vases and terracotta figurines.⁸ While the existing visual evidence rarely answers specific questions about the exact staging of a comic scene (nor should it be asked to do so), it offers valuable insight as to how comic performances, including costumes, were seen by a member of an ancient

audience (the painter or coroplast) and then in turn represented to his own audience. Studies of dress and the body in classical Greek art can also inform our discussion of the visual aspects of comic costume.⁹

Much about comic costume implicates the body and the construction of gender, so I am heavily indebted to the work on gender and sexuality that began in the 1980s with groundbreaking studies on gender in Greek drama by Froma Zeitlin, Helene Foley, and John Winkler and has continued in analyses by Lauren Taaffe, Karen Bassi, Laura McClure, Eva Stehle, and Sarah Culpepper Stroup.¹⁰ This work is not yet complete. On the one hand, too much of Aristophanic scholarship has continued to proceed as though the masculine viewpoint from which and to which Old Comedy spoke is simply a given of the genre, requiring no further examination. On the other hand, some of the orthodoxies of feminist scholarship deserve to be reevaluated. For example, it is one of the central arguments of this book that disguise, deceit, and artificiality itself are not consistently gendered as female in Greek comedy, despite the generalizations still frequently made to that effect about ancient Greek culture.¹¹ We need to give Odysseus, male master of disguise and lies, his rightful place as a mythical paradigm for the manipulation of costume, next to the oft-cited Pandora with her feminine trappings of deceit. And, indeed, many of the costume dynamics that we encounter in Aristophanes have parallels in that most masculine of epics, the *Iliad*, where great significance is laid on the manipulation of armor as it is put on, stripped, and exchanged.

Finally, my interpretation of the dynamics of costume in Aristophanes relies on an understanding of Old Comedy as fundamentally competitive. The agonistic nature of comedy is manifest in its festival setting (dramatic competitions), its very structure (an *agon* at the heart of the play), its attitude toward rival comic poets (fiercely antagonistic), and its appropriation of rival genres (voraciously competitive).¹² For the protagonist and for the playwright, it is all about winning, and the competition takes place on many fronts. I suggest that costume, too, is profitably viewed through this lens: not as mere decoration, not only as a convenient means of conveying a character's class or ethnic origin, comic costume, in action, is also a way to demonstrate who is winning.

METHODOLOGY AND EVIDENCE

The limits of our sources for fifth-century comic performances are well known to classicists but bear repeating for those readers who may be more familiar with later periods of drama and more modern performance media. Of course, we have no photographs, audio, or video of these performances. We have no "making of" additional bonus material, no interviews with the director and cast, no performance reviews, no correspondence between major players. No costumes survive, nor do we have descriptions of them written by people who

saw them in person; we cannot visit the Old Comedy Hall of Fame and see the outfit worn by so-and-so at that famous performance. Our surviving texts contain no stage directions. Sometimes we are not even sure which character is speaking which lines. For the hundreds of plays that survive only in fragments, we have even less context, making anything but a speculative reconstruction of those lost plays' staging nearly impossible.¹³

Given these limitations, there are many perplexing questions about fifth-century comic costume that will probably never find a definitive answer. What did the *Frogs* chorus(es) look like? How on earth was the Eye of the King in *Acharnians* costumed? Were the Megarian's daughters in *Acharnians* actually human actors outfitted as pigs, and if so, how could they have been carried in a sack? How true to life were the portrait masks of well-known public figures like Euripides or Socrates? What did Tereus's plumage look like in *Birds*, and how closely was it modeled on a visual effect from Sophocles' *Tereus*? How was Comedy herself costumed in Cratinus's *Wineflask*? How about the chorus of demes in Eupolis's *Demes*? Was every single female character in Old Comedy played by a man in drag, or were the mute females played by real women? The number of unanswerable questions can be rather discouraging; but, on the other hand, the very existence of these questions points to the imaginative variety and indeed importance of Old Comedy's visual spectacle.

One approach to this problem is to forgo pursuit of the original performance conditions in order to examine more recent revivals of the plays or their potential as scripts. Indeed, specialists in theater studies and reception studies suggest that we are asking the wrong questions when we fixate on the exact conditions of that original performance. Meaning is created anew in each performance, and as Revermann puts it, "only a classicist" would privilege the original performance as the only "authentic" one.¹⁴ The proliferation of reception-focused studies of Greek drama, spearheaded by scholars such as Marianne McDonald, Gonda Van Steen, and Edith Hall, demonstrates how much we can learn from studying reperformances in other eras and in other cultures.¹⁵ Certainly a study of any performance illuminates the possibilities inherent in casting, costuming, and staging decisions.¹⁶ But I remain unrepentantly interested in performance within a fifth- and fourth-century B.C.E. Greek milieu (which includes Greek cities in southern Italy) not because these are the only performances that matter but because there is still much yet to be discerned about the function and meaning of comic costume within the culture in which Old Comedy flourished. I want to know, or approximate as closely as possible, what the costume patterns embedded in these plays meant to that audience, at that time, in that cultural context. And despite the challenges posed by our fragmentary evidence, all is not lost. Two complementary types of evidence form the basis for this study: the archaeological record and the texts of the plays themselves.

The archaeological record – terracotta figurines of comic actors, vase paintings of comic scenes, and other archaeological remains – offers substantial evidence for the standard components of the comic costume of the fifth and fourth centuries. Of course, the visual evidence must be treated with caution. One must be attentive to the effect of a particular medium on the way costume is depicted. For example, the clay material and three-dimensional shape of terracotta figurines are not well suited to easily broken protrusions like the long staff that is commonly held by comic males in vase painting; coroplasts usually omit the staff.¹⁷ Because extant comic vase painting is largely monochrome, it can tell us little about the use of color in costume; for that, we rely primarily on small traces of paint left on some terracotta figurines. Regional and chronological variations in the material evidence also make generalizations hazardous.¹⁸ And although comic vase paintings, unlike terracotta figurines, often depict whole scenes, specialists in iconography remind us emphatically that these scenes cannot be taken at face value as snapshots of comic performances.¹⁹ Vase paintings, even those most directly connected to comic performances, operate within their own iconographic traditions, which are often not primarily concerned with verisimilitude. Also, because the proportions of a vase create a more compressed space than would have been typical for actual theaters, the painter may omit persons or objects that would have been present at the performance (e.g., a full chorus, stage hands, or non-essential props). Furthermore, most of the archaeological evidence postdates Aristophanic comedy by about a half century; originates in southern Italy, not Athens; and focuses exclusively on the actors, with little sign of the chorus that was so important in fifth-century drama.²⁰ Another complicating factor is that, of the more than two hundred surviving vase paintings depicting comic scenes or actors, only a few can be connected to a known Attic comedy; the rest are, in a sense, another set of comic fragments with problems of interpretation equaling those of our textual fragments.²¹

Despite these caveats, the importance of the archaeological record for understanding comic performances should not be underestimated. Indeed, the publication and identification by Kossatz-Deissmann, Csapo, and Taplin of a fourth-century Apulian bell-krater (Figure 13) as a scene from Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria* was one of the most exciting developments in the study of Greek drama in the late twentieth century.²² Two factors work in our favor as we try to make use of visual evidence. First, the vase painters, sculptors, and coroplasts who depicted comic characters or scenes chose to make the infrastructure of the performance – costumes, masks, stage – explicit. Each depiction goes out of its way to show that this is a costumed actor, not just some fat guy doing something silly. Second, the main components of comic costume evidenced in the archaeological record are remarkably consistent from the late fifth century through the middle of the fourth century (when

they begin to lose their grotesque elements) and across different regions of Greece and Magna Graecia.²³ This consistency makes it possible to describe with quite a bit of confidence what the standard male comic costume looks like: a grotesque, bearded mask with attached wig; a well-padded bodysuit; on top of that, a short tunic that leaves the outsized artificial phallus visible; and, sometimes, also a *himation* (cloak) and shoes.

The texts of our plays, the second major source of evidence, confirm the basic elements of comic costume with many passing references to clothes, headgear, shoes, and the like. Indeed, much of Stone's compendium on costume results from a careful extraction of this kind of information from the texts paired with the archaeological record. One important way in which the texts complement, rather than simply corroborate, the archaeological evidence is by providing information about anomalous costumes, which are usually mentioned at their first appearance. For example, in *Birds*, the beak of Tereus's servant, the strange spectacle of Tereus himself, the costumes of the bird chorus, the appearance of Procne, and the protagonists' newly winged outfits all receive comment from other characters. Likewise, the costume of the Persian ambassadors or the Eye of the King in *Acharnians* (64, 94–7), Agathon's effeminate appearance in *Women at the Thesmophoria* (134–43), and Blepyrus's cross-dressed trip to the outhouse in *Assemblywomen* (327–30) all prompt a strong verbal response from the onstage viewers. "Wowee-zowee! Ecbatana, what a getup!" says Dicaeopolis in the first of these examples.²⁴ While these references can be exasperatingly cryptic and never amount to a detailed description of the costume, they do serve to highlight its anomalous status. On the basis of passages like these, I take it as a premise that a significantly unusual costume will not go unmentioned; therefore, silence about costume implies a normal comic costume on the character. This eliminates the possibility that, for example, the Athenian Dicaeopolis is wearing a Persian or Spartan outfit throughout *Acharnians* (a costume that would radically undermine his persona as average Athenian), but no one in the play ever mentions it. I emphasize this somewhat obvious point because this is precisely an area where ancient drama is profoundly different from modern performance, particularly revivals, where some of the performance's meaning can arise from an unspoken contrast between text and (anachronistic) costume.

Perhaps most importantly for this study, the texts of Old Comedy offer a plethora of information about comic costume in action, that is, as it is being put to use by characters on the stage. Every play is filled with dozens of verbal references to costume: "Take this veil from me and put it on your head" (*Lys.* 532–3); "I'm being stripped in broad daylight!" (*Wealth* 930); "Let's take off our cloaks and start on the anapests" (*Ach.* 627); "Take off those damn shoes, and hurry up and put on these Laconian boots" (*Wasps* 1157–8); "Hitch up your tunics and put on your Laconian boots pronto, as you've seen your

husbands do” (*Ass.* 268–70). While these words do not tell us everything there is to know about the costume’s appearance (Lysistrata does not say, “Take this purple-dyed wool veil and put it on your head, which is covered with Mask Type X”), remember that our primary focus is on the costume in action. I take it as another given that lines like these have a straightforward relationship to what is happening onstage. That is, “take this veil from me” indicates that the speaker is actually wearing a veil (not, say, a helmet), and, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it indicates that the speaker does in fact remove the veil and give it to the addressee.²⁵

Such verbal references do not mark every single costume-related action in Old Comedy, but those costume actions that are verbalized are precisely the ones that the playwright most wants his audience to notice. My position with regard to the relationship between comic texts and stage action (and here I focus on costume-related action in particular) is thus a modified form of the “significant action hypothesis,” which posits that significant stage activity is always marked with words.²⁶ To be sure, plenty of unremarked action, much more so than in tragedy, clearly must occur within an Aristophanic production. Thus the most extreme construal of this principle, namely that nothing happens unless it is mentioned in the text, is clearly inappropriate for comedy. It would be nearly impossible during the frenetic course of a comedy for each and every action to be verbalized. Minor characters arrive and depart the stage, props are brought on and off, and characters sometimes change costumes without mention.²⁷ As Joe Park Poe has elucidated, one difference between tragic and comic action is that tragic action is consequential, that is to say, part of a tightly constructed logic in which emotions, gestures, entrances, and exits have meaning and consequence.²⁸ Old Comedy’s more “open” plots, in contrast, by their discontinuous and disjunctive nature, leave room for action that is inconsequential to the point of absurdity, such as the scurrying back and forth of stagehands or unmotivated entrances and exits.

To acknowledge that much comic action is meaningless and goes unremarked, or even that very funny sequences in Aristophanes depend almost completely on visual humor not captured by words, is not at all to say that the verbal remarks that we do have are unhelpful for the interpretation of stage action. Far from it. Indeed, in the hyperactive world of comedy, verbal reference is all the more necessary in order to call attention to the actions that do in fact have consequence. To take just two examples, our texts pay great attention to the donning of Dicaeopolis’s Telephus disguise in *Acharnians*, but they never indicate when he takes it off; likewise, we hear a lot about the stripping of the chorus in *Lysistrata*, but with regard to the old women’s semi-chorus, there is no explicit verbal reference to the moment when the stage-naked old women put their clothes back on. We have already observed the pattern in which costumes that deviate from the norm (here, beggar disguise and the nudity of

citizen women) are emphasized by being verbalized; they are, in other words, significant. Return to the status quo, on the other hand (abandonment of beggar disguise and reclothing of women), is less remarkable and thus goes unremarked.²⁹ The case of the two semi-choruses in *Lysistrata* shows the playwright differentiating between significant and insignificant costume action. While the women's redressing passes unmentioned, the more significant reclothing of the male semi-chorus by the women, a gesture of reconciliation that is a turning point in the play's development, is duly noted with words (1019–21).

Let me sum up, then, the way I see the relationship between text and costume-related action. First, I assume that actions that are indicated in the text do in fact occur and that physical objects onstage, including costumes, are what characters say they are. Second, verbalization of action functions as a kind of spotlight, directing the audience's attention to particular movements or visual cues and thereby marking those as important.³⁰ Stage action is not, however, limited to those actions that are explicitly mentioned in the text.

This brings us to one final thought about the nature of our evidence for comic costume. Paradoxically, comic costume sometimes confounds us with too much uncontrollable material. This is to be expected. In contrast with tragedy, its sister and rival genre, fifth-century comedy offers both a richer use of costume and greater challenges in making sense of it all. Tragic deployment of costume, like much else about that genre, is highly stylized and concentrated. Imagine that symbolically laden crimson cloth in Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, with its sparing but effective recurrence throughout the trilogy.³¹ Old Comedy, by contrast, is busier, messier, more mundane, more protean, more resistant to neat categorization, more inclined to treat its material as a theme with many variations.³² A single play of Aristophanes can offer dozens of handlings of costume – just counting those that are explicitly mentioned in the text. For that reason, there will inevitably be some loose ends, strands of costume that the playwright has not bothered to weave closely into the fabric of the play or that I have not been able to tuck up under the hems of my analysis. What follows, therefore, is an attempt to discern some patterns in a genre characterized by disorder and variation.

FOUR BASIC TYPES OF COSTUME MANIPULATION

In the competitive world of Aristophanic comedy, control over costume is a sign of mastery that marks one character as dominant over another. This dynamic finds strong parallels with the control of armor in the equally agonistic world of the *Iliad*.³³ Just as bodily integrity is central to an epic warrior's very survival in combat, so it has also been argued that in fifth-century Athens, to maintain one's body free from violation by another is the hallmark of the citizen male. John Winkler has stated, "To put your hand on a citizen's body

is to insult him profoundly, implying that he is a social inferior.”³⁴ Control over clothing is closely linked with control over the body itself: to have one’s cloak forcibly removed is one small step away from being physically beaten. In comic performances, this contiguity between body and clothing is particularly strong, since the body itself is a set of garments worn by the actor. On top of that foundational layer, the body, lies the clothing per se; sometimes a character adds a third layer, such as a disguise. The same Greek noun, σκευή (which includes accessories) can be used to refer to any of these three layers, and when characters speak of dressing themselves or another in some kind of disguise, they use the related verb (ἐν)σκευάζω.³⁵ I will argue for the continuity of a fundamentally agonistic dynamic throughout the various layers of costume worn by a comic actor.

The workings of costume in Aristophanes are best examined within the context of each individual comedy, where patterns or themes particular to that play can have significant effect on our interpretation of costume activity. But before we embark on that project, it will be helpful to consider briefly four basic types of costume manipulation that recur in multiple plays. I signal at many points that a particular issue will be treated at greater length in subsequent chapters, where the secondary literature will be more extensively engaged. The comparisons that I draw with epic are intended, on the one hand, to establish basic elements in Greek thought about costume and equipment across genres and also, on the other hand, to highlight by contrast complications and issues specific to the comic genre.³⁶

1. Voluntary Stripping. The practice of voluntarily removing part of one’s own costume to reveal something underneath is quite rare in Aristophanes, with two major exceptions.

The first exception is removal of some part of the costume by members of the chorus.³⁷ This is sometimes called “parabolic” stripping, since in two plays it occurs immediately before the parabasis, but it also occurs in other parts of a play and is therefore not so easily categorized. Choral disrobing seems a rather *sui generis* convention, stemming from the somewhat autonomous practices surrounding choral costume that we will consider further in [Chapter 5](#). Nevertheless, the removal of the chorus’s costume can be incorporated thematically into a play, as we will see in *Lysistrata*.

Other instances of voluntary stripping in Aristophanes’ plays are restricted almost entirely to *Lysistrata*.³⁸ In that play, the elaborate choral stripping mentioned earlier is followed by the striptease performed by the character Myrrhine in the presence of her sexually desperate husband. As we will see in [Chapter 2](#), disrobing recurs in several other iterations throughout *Lysistrata*, making it a play uniquely concerned with revealing the comic body. This focus on the body has an obvious correlation with the sexual theme of *Lysistrata*. Yet

even among Greek seduction scenes, such voluntary disrobing by the woman is unprecedented, and the women's manipulation of both body and costume in *Lysistrata* should be seen as anomalous.³⁹

Voluntary stripping, unlike the other dynamics we will encounter, finds no comfortable parallels on the battlefield, where such action would be suicidal. Recall Hector's deliberation in *Iliad* 22.111–30, when he considers putting aside his weapons and meeting Achilles for negotiations. Quickly he realizes that he would be slaughtered: "He would kill me, nude, like a woman, since I stripped away my weapons."⁴⁰ This image of the nakedly vulnerable, feminized Hector, which foreshadows his own death and the despoliation of his corpse, illustrates why no one would choose to remove his own armor in such a situation.⁴¹ Something of the same connection of exposure with vulnerability, defeat, and sexual submission may partly explain why comic protagonists are more interested in exposing others than in revealing themselves. Aside from choral stripping and the instances in *Lysistrata*, the only other voluntary disrobing in Aristophanes occurs in *Clouds*, where the Stronger Logos drops his cloak at the end of the *agon* in an explicit gesture of defeat: "I'm beaten. Buggers, take my cloak, by the gods; I'm deserting to your side" (*Clouds* 1101–4).⁴²

2. Involuntary Stripping. When one comic character strips another, by either physical force or verbal commands, the stripped character is marked as having lower status. The *locus classicus* for this action is Thersites' treatment by Odysseus at *Iliad* 2.259–64, where Odysseus threatens that if he catches Thersites acting up again, "May Odysseus's head no longer remain on his shoulders, nor may I any longer be called father of Telemachus, unless I take you and strip off your dear clothes, both *chlaina* and *chiton*, which cover your genitals, and send you wailing off to the swift ships, striking you from the agora with unseemly blows."⁴³ The dominance expressed in such stripping is found repeatedly in the pervasive practice of stripping armor off a defeated foe. In Aristophanes, the action of physically removing another character's costume is quite common and tends to be inflicted on unlikable characters who earn a dressing-down at the hands of the protagonist. The best example of this is the informer (a sort of Old Comic version of Thersites, representing everything the protagonist hates), who at *Wealth* 930 has his cloak and shoes removed by Cario and the just man: "I'm being stripped in broad daylight!" he cries, and before his departure he explicitly admits his defeat (944–5): "I'm leaving, since I recognize that I'm much weaker than you."⁴⁴

Often a protagonist is able to effect this stripping simply by ordering it to happen. For example, Dicaeopolis disarms Lamachus by commanding him to put down his shield and remove a plume from his crest (with which Dicaeopolis pretends to induce vomiting into the shield) at *Acharnians* 581–6.

Likewise, a servant in *Birds* is summarily relieved of his clothes by an imperious Peisetaerus (933–4, 947–8).⁴⁵ Male characters order servile women to take off their clothes: Euripides commands the flute girl in *Women at the Thesmophoria* to take off some of her clothes (1181–3), and Trygaeus tells Theoria to put down her things at *Peace* 886. Characters who remove their clothes at someone else's bidding often explicitly indicate that they have surrendered control of themselves (*Clouds* 439–42; *Wasps* 1129–30; *Women at the Thesmophoria* 212). A sneakier way to best another character is to steal his clothes when he is not looking. Socrates does both in *Clouds*, first ordering Strepsiades to remove his cloak and shoes and then making off with them (*Clouds* 497–500, 856, 1498). The women of *Assemblywomen* steal their husbands' *himatia* and shoes while the men are sleeping. We will take a closer look at cloak stealing and its resonance within a particularly fifth- and fourth-century Athenian socioeconomic context in [Chapter 3](#). For now I will emphasize that while these methods of involuntary clothing removal take place within a spectrum of physical contact, from physical violence to verbally coerced stripping to clothing theft, they manifest the same power dynamic: to be stripped is to be defeated.

While the fundamentally demeaning experience of being stripped finds parallels in epic, nevertheless the connotations of bodily exposure are far more complex in comic performance than in epic narrative. In Old Comedy, the equation of exposure with defeat coexists with another dynamic, the open display of the grotesque male body. A significant amount of exposure is already inherent in the costuming of male comic characters, with their visible genitalia and protuberant bodies. Odysseus in the *Iliad* may threaten to expose Thersites' private parts by stripping him, but if they were both characters in a comedy, their genitals would already be prominently displayed as part of their normal costume. Furthermore, that these comic bodies are manifestly false (as vase paintings go out of their way to show) presents a further layer of complexity: comedy offers an extraordinary exposure of the body, but that body is false and completely conceals a real body underneath. This paradoxical mixture of revelation and concealment of the body as presented in comic costume will be a central theme of [Chapter 2](#).

3. Addition of Clothing or Accessories. At an Aristophanic character's first appearance, he or she is already wearing his or her identifying clothing and accessories, whether standard Athenian attire or a wildly unusual getup. In other words, characters in Aristophanic comedy do not ever enter the stage partly stage-nude and complete their dressing onstage. This initial fully costumed presentation is very helpful for the audience, which is shown each character's baseline identity through costume at the start before any sartorial tomfoolery begins. It also means that any dressing that takes place onstage involves an overlaying of a second identity (or a third, if we count the actor).

In its simplest form, the overlay can be a pair of objects added for temporary effect: the snouts and hooves worn by the Megarian's daughters in *Acharnians*, the veil and weaving equipment foisted upon the Proboulos in *Lysistrata*, the wings (and perhaps beaks) requisitioned by Peisetaerus and Euelpides in *Birds*, or the lion skin and club worn by Dionysus (and later Xanthias) in *Frogs*. (For some reason these kinds of costume additions tend to come in sets of two, perhaps by analogy with the common pairing of *himation* and shoes.) On a much more elaborate scale are the full-blown disguises donned by Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians*, the Relative in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, and the women in *Assemblywomen*. In these extended scenes, multiple pieces of costume are acquired and donned on top of an existing layer of clothing by a character who intends to take on a new, false identity.

In most instances, another character furnishes the additional costume pieces, functioning like the "provider of divine assistance" commonly found in folklore. Aristophanes adapts the provider role significantly for his purposes in various plays: in *Acharnians* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*, the supplier is a tragic poet, a choice that opens up extensive parodic engagement with tragic theater. In *Birds*, first Tereus provides wings (by means of a magic root, he claims) to Peisetaerus and Euelpides, and then Peisetaerus takes over the role of costume provider, much as he takes over everything else, for the rest of the play. In *Lysistrata*, on the other hand, the provision of costume is performed by female characters and is thematically linked with their traditional role as providers of textiles. In *Assemblywomen*, we see not a provision but a usurpation of clothing, a theft that I will argue (in [Chapter 3](#)) is central to the play's themes.

An important key to understanding the underlying dynamics of such overlaying of costume, including disguise, is that of control: whether the supplementary costume was freely chosen or whether, on the other hand, it was forced upon the character. It is my contention that the addition of costume operates on a principle akin to the one we saw with stripping of costume: to have a new costume forced on one is degrading and status reducing, while to freely choose and manipulate one's disguise is status enhancing. The connection with death that we saw in costume stripping extends to involuntary costume supplements as well: those who have their costumes handled by someone else, whether that handling is an addition or a subtraction of clothing, are compared to sacrificial victims (the piggies at *Acharnians* 747, 764, 784–96; Strepsiades at *Clouds* 254–7; Lampito at *Lysistrata* 84) or corpses (Proboulos at *Lysistrata* 599–613; Blepyrus at *Assemblywomen* 536–8). This link between status and costume control has important ramifications for our understanding of disguise and gender in Old Comedy, a subject to which I return at greater length in [Chapter 4](#).

Thus Aristophanic disguising scenes bring the agonistic spirit of gear manipulation found in the *Iliad* to the complex issues of identity and deceit

most extensively explored in the *Odyssey*. And indeed Odysseus is sometimes presented as a model for the comic protagonist, implicitly in the beggar disguise of Dicaeopolis and explicitly in references to Odyssean machinations in *Wasps* (180–9 and 351; more on this in [Chapter 4](#)). But, again, Old Comedy presents more layers of complexity than does epic disguise. In the *Odyssey*, we encounter Odysseus stripped bare in book 5 and follow his gradual assumption of identities throughout the epic. But in comic performances, there is always at least one layer of hidden identity, since no speaking actor is ever truly bared. Vase paintings like the Würzburg Telephus bell-krater ([Figure 13](#)) or St. Agata Antigone bell-krater ([Figure 22](#)), which depict comic performers wearing multiple layers of costume and disguise, remind us of the complex strata of garments presented by comic disguise. And, of course, the donning of extra layers of clothing and false identity is integral to the theater itself. Hence comic disguising scenes become vehicles for exploring the nature of mimesis and the function of the comic poet, another topic of consideration in [Chapter 4](#).

4. Costume Changes and Exchanges. So far I have emphasized control of costume, and the agonistic nature of comic costume activity. Yet there are also instances in Aristophanes when the costume itself, rather than the terms of its manipulation, is the vehicle for an exploration of status. A change in costume, in which a performer discards one piece of costume or (rarely) mask offstage and replaces it with another, can be used to signify a change in status.⁴⁶ For example, the rejuvenated Demos reappears at the end of *Knights* in new clothes (1331). The newly enhanced standing of Peisetaerus in *Birds* is indicated by the bridegroom's robe that he calls for at 1693 in anticipation of his marriage to Basilea. We are told in *Assemblywomen* that Geron has discarded his old shoes and *tribon*, a common outer garment, and now sports an elegant *chlanis* (848–50). This use of new costume to indicate altered status has parallels in tragic staging as well, most notably the purple robes worn by the newly converted Eumenides at the end of the *Oresteia* trilogy (*Eumenides* 1028).⁴⁷ Unlike tragedy, though, Aristophanic comedy also presents extended onstage costume exchanges like those in *Wasps*, *Frogs*, and *Assemblywomen*, where characters in some sense trade costumes. These scenes focus on dichotomized social roles (young and old, rich and poor, slave and free, human and divine, male and female), with one set of clothing representing each role. As we will see in [Chapter 3](#), costume exchanges are particularly common in plays with socio-economic themes.

Costume changes rest on the fundamental principle that the outfit worn accurately represents the character's status. Hence a new status brings new clothes. This principle is affiliated in turn with the conventional Greek demand for a correspondence between external appearance and internal character. In a staged performance, such a system has the practical benefit of conveying

visually the status of the character. In archaic epic, it manifests itself in the convention dictating that the weapons match the fighter: the more prestigious the fighter, the more elaborate the weapon. In such a system, misalignments between costume and status are a source of tension. Consider *Iliad* 14.370–82, where the Achaeans at Poseidon’s behest exchange armor so that the best fighters have the best equipment. The most famous and disastrous misalignment in epic occurs when Patroclus wears Achilles’ armor, to his own doom. In another sense, much of the *Odyssey* plays out the tension between Odysseus’s humble appearance and his heroic stature.

Just as Patroclus cannot become Achilles simply by wearing his armor, so a comic character cannot attain a new status simply by donning its external trappings. This is most evident in *Wasps*, where Bdelycleon attempts to make his father into a more sophisticated man by dressing him in stylish, aristocratic clothes (1122–73). The failure of this enterprise entertains the audience for the remainder of the play. Likewise, in *Frogs*, the attempt of Dionysus to fool others with his Heracleian accoutrements backfires by making his cowardice even more noticeable against his incongruously heroic costume. In a series of costume exchanges, Dionysus and his slave Xanthias act out their struggle to properly align the *σχήμα* (external appearance) with the *λῆμα* (spirit, temperament).⁴⁸ Thus while a costume change in Aristophanes can be used to *represent* a new status, characters experience much more difficulty when they themselves try to use costume changes to *create* changes in status. Such scenes set up the incongruity on which comedy thrives: an old geezer in hipster clothes or an effeminate god in the guise of the most masculine of heroes. These scenes also demonstrate an allegiance to a fairly traditional understanding of the relationship between costume and status: clothes do not make the man.

In the context of a theatrical performance, however, it is somewhat paradoxical to find Aristophanes calling into question the power of costume to transform status and character. After all, is not Greek drama built on the notion that one can temporarily become someone else by putting on a costume and a mask? David Wiles has argued that “Athenians used the mask not to conceal but to effect a transformation of the substance within” and that “the tragic mask was a tool for achieving presence, not distance.”⁴⁹ Aristophanes himself raises this issue – with regard to clothing, not the mask – in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, where the effeminately dressed tragic poet Agathon explains that he wears women’s clothing when composing “female dramas” (*Thesm.* 148–56). Agathon does not express himself very clearly, leaving it ambiguous whether he sees his feminine attire as enabling the composition of female parts or simply a necessary corollary to them.⁵⁰ This passage will demand our attention and further exploration in [Chapter 4](#). Yet there are signs both in vase painting and in the texts of our plays that comedy comes at the relationship between costume and mimesis from a different angle from the one Wiles suggests for

tragedy. The costume exchanges that we examine in [Chapter 3](#) can help us to tease out Aristophanic comedy's understanding of the power of costume (or its inability) to transform.

There are significant overlap and interplay among the categories of comic costume interaction that I have delineated here. One costume sequence can involve multiple types of costume manipulation, and one action can be interpreted through more than one of these categories. In *Assemblywomen*, for example, the women dress in male clothes (overlay of disguise) that they have filched from their husbands (stripping), forcing the husbands in turn to wear their wives' clothes (exchange). As we examine costume dynamics within whole plays, we will have cause to return to all of the issues sketched out here, seeing how they interact with and express each play's themes. But before we do so, we need to consider further the foundational layer of costume worn by comic actors, a layer of costume emblematic of the comic genre – the body itself.

TWO

THE COMIC BODY AS COSTUME

The phrase “nudity as a costume” has become commonplace among art historians, used to suggest that nudity in classical art is analogous to clothing and serves many of its same functions.¹ On the ancient comic stage, “the body as costume” has a much more literal meaning, since the comic body is literally a set of garments that the actor wears over his own body. The technical term used in later antiquity for this theatrical bodysuit is σωματίον, “little body”; henceforth I will employ *somation* to denote the actor’s body costume. The connection between body and costume is concisely conveyed by the lexicographer Pollux, writing in the second century of the Common Era: σωματίον· ἢ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν σκευή, “*little body*: the costume of actors.”² This body costume is so prominent in depictions of comic scenes in vase painting that the clothing itself – tunic or *himation*, or both – worn by the character often seems trivial in comparison. One of the most important contributions of vase painting to our appreciation of ancient comedy is its capacity to remind us of the visual prominence of the comic body onstage. This chapter examines the comic body costume from four points of view: first, the contributions of the visual record to our understanding of the body as staged in comic performances; second, some common patterns of bodily manipulation in Aristophanes; third, the comic body as figure of gluttony and outrageous demagoguery in *Knights*; fourth, the thematic interweaving of body and textiles in *Lysistrata*.

ENVISIONING THE COMIC BODY

The Male Comic Body

The male comic body as depicted in the visual record of the late fifth through mid-fourth century is both grotesque and manifestly artificial. Both of these elements are evident from the top of the character's head to his ankles. As Angeliki Varakis has argued, the comic mask and the comic bodysuit work together as a system to form one grotesque whole.³ The actor's head is covered by a mask with grotesque features: upturned nose, gaping mouth, and unrefined facial structure, often with wrinkles. These features are exemplified by the masks of the three figures on an Apulian red-figure bell-krater of c. 380–370, which is sometimes called “The Reckoning” because of the tablets and stylus held by the central figure and the woman at right (Figure 1).⁴ Like the masks of the two male figures at left and center of the “Reckoning” krater, adult male comic masks almost invariably include beards, many of which are depicted in a stylized triangular shape.⁵ Depictions of actors holding masks show that wig and mask form one unit that completely encompasses the actor's head.⁶ Masks can indicate the character's sex and age by the use of ruddy color for male masks and white paint for female masks – though this is not always included in vase painting – and white hair for characters of advanced age.⁷ The degree to which fifth-century comedy, with its staging of named individuals from Athenian real life and its relatively large number of characters in each play, employed individuation in masks is a matter of some uncertainty.⁸ Stone prudently concludes her survey of the evidence for Old Comic masks by positing “a loose set of conventions which facilitated easy identification of the sex, the status, and especially the age of the wearer, but still allowed some degree of originality and individuality.”⁹ Gradually a more rigidly typed system develops when stock characters take over the stage in New Comedy.¹⁰

An examination of comic masks on vase paintings and terracotta figurines reveals how inseparable the grotesque and the artificial are in the visualization of comic performances. Some of the features that mark a comic mask as grotesque are the very same ones that mark it as a mask. For example, on the “Reckoning” bell-krater (Figure 1), the male characters' prominently jutting lower jaw, covered by a beard and with gaping mouth, simultaneously indicates the presence of a comic mask and contributes to the grotesque silhouette of the character; likewise, a strongly marked jaw line curving directly to oversized ears delineates a mask and at the same time points to a nonideal facial feature. The same could be said for the wrinkled thickness of the comic faces, which not only depart from ideals of youthful delicacy but also suggest the very substance of the mask itself.



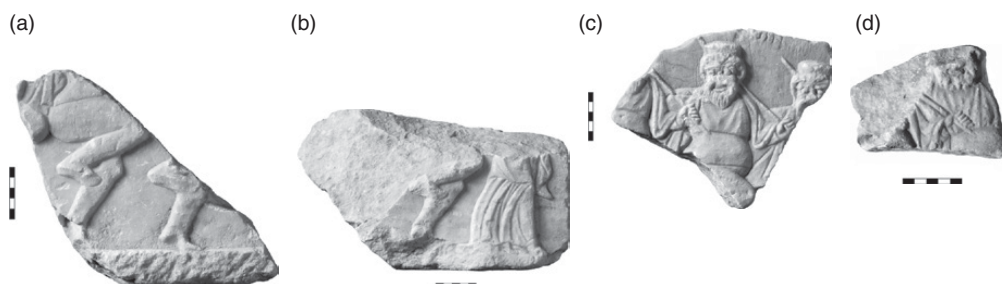
1. The Reckoning: Slave and woman hold tablets while old man looks on. Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 380–370. St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum inv. B-1661. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Svetlana Suetova.

The grotesque silhouette of the comic actor is most prominently created by the padded comic bodysuit. An exaggerated belly and rear end, as well as a long phallus, are near-universal in depictions of comic actors on Attic and southern Italian vases, carved reliefs from Attica, and terracotta figurines from this period.¹¹ Even when the comic body is depicted clothed, as it is most often, the belly and rump nevertheless announce themselves as large rounded shapes below the actor's tunic.¹² For example, the stomach padding is quite apparent in an Attic terracotta figurine of a comic actor, c. 400 (Figure 2).¹³ The phallus is usually visible, dangling below the tunic's hem (as is usual in vase painting and



2. Comic actor wiping his eye. Attic terracotta, c. 400. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.225.13).

Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.



3. Chorus of padded dancers. Attic relief, c. 350–325. Athens, Agora S 1025 and 1586. Photograph courtesy of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.



4. Chorus of padded dancers. Attic relief, c. 350–325. Athens, Agora S 2098. Photograph courtesy of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.

evident in [Figure 1](#)) or rolled up (as is more common in terracotta figurines and evident in [Figure 2](#)). Sometimes, though not always, breast padding is detectable as well, even for male characters. Presumably this denotes flabby old age on male characters and, on a practical level, simplifies the actor's transition from male to female characters.¹⁴ The padding of the body seems at least in some cases to have extended to the chorus as well: two fragmentary Attic reliefs from the fourth century depict padded comic dancers ([Figures 3 and 4](#)).¹⁵



5. Comic actors offstage. Attic red-figure chous, c. 400. St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum inv. Fa. 1869.47.

Photograph courtesy of Jeffrey S. Rusten.

Several vases depicting male stage nudity reveal the underpinnings of this comic silhouette. While there are local variations in detail, the basic structure of the costume is remarkably consistent. The actor's torso is typically covered by a kind of leotard, which is padded at the stomach, buttocks, and chest. Two Attic vases produced during Aristophanes' lifetime show this leotard quite clearly. On an Attic red-figure chous dated to about 400 (Figure 5), which depicts several actors in various stages of costuming, the two undressed actors wear padded leotards.¹⁶ A very similar outfit is worn by the comic figures on another Attic oinochoe of the same date that may depict a scene from Eupolis's *Taxiarchoi*.¹⁷ Two well-known early fourth-century vases from southern Italy each portray a pair of comic characters in well-padded stage nudity: the "New York Goose Play" vase, a Lucanian calyx-krater dated to about 400 (Figure 6); and the "Boston Goose Play" vase, an Apulian bell-krater dated about thirty years later (Figure 7), both apparently depicting scenes from the same play.¹⁸ Both characters on each vase have padded stomachs and buttocks, dangling phalluses, and padded breasts. On the New York Goose Play krater, the stomach padding is tied on top of the leotard at waist level, although the Boston krater depicting the same characters shows no ties.¹⁹ If indeed the padding was sometimes attached on top of the leotard, this could have facilitated



6. New York Goose Play. Lucanian red-figure calyx-krater, c. 400. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1924 (24.97.104).

Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

different degrees of corpulence among the various characters that the actor portrays. In cases where stage nudity was planned, the leotard could be marked with lines indicating nipples, pectorals, navel, and pubic hair. Such is the case, for example, on both Goose Play vases. In other instances, as on the Phanagoria chous (Figure 5) where the actors are depicted “backstage” and onstage nudity was presumably not planned, the bodysuit could be left unmarked. On Paestan vases, the leotard is depicted in a dark red-brown color contrasting with the actor’s light-colored tights and has a lighter shade around the nipples. An example of this distinctive Paestan costume can be seen on Figure 8, a calyx-krater of c. 350–325 attributed to Asteas.²⁰ This Paestan iconography, while of interest



7. Boston Goose Play. Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 370. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Otis Norcross Fund 69.951.

Photograph © 2015 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

for its depiction of the comic body, has been demonstrated to stand at quite some distance from Athenian stage practice.²¹

In depictions of comic scenes, the limbs of both stage-nude and clothed actors are almost invariably covered with close-fitting, full-length sleeves and leggings. These tights, indicated by lines at wrists and ankles, can be seen on numerous vase paintings from both Attica and Magna Graecia, as well as dozens of terracotta figurines. A sleeve of this kind appears on the very earliest Attic representation of a comic actor, a cup fragment dated by Mary Moore to 450–440 B.C.E. and by Webster to no later than 430.²² It seems clear that the leggings and sleeves were supposed to represent skin: even stage-naked characters wear them. Since Greeks did not normally wear pants or long sleeves, there was no correlation for these leggings and sleeves in real-life clothing; indeed, as Stone says, “these tights were clearly designed for and limited to the exigencies of the theater.”²³ Yet while the comic bodysuit represents skin, it does so with nowhere near the degree of verisimilitude that one would find, for example, on the costumes of modern figure skaters. While this difference



8. Old man lies on a chest while two slaves tug at him. Paestan calyx-krater, c. 350–325. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen F 3044.

Photo Credit: bpk, Berlin/Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen/Johannes Laurentius/Art Resource, NY.

from modern costume is not surprising given the limited materials that the ancient costume makers had at their disposal (e.g., there were no stretch fabrics), nevertheless comic art chooses to highlight rather than minimize the falsity of that layer of “skin.” Vase painters render the leggings and sleeves with such overstated wrinkles that there is no mistaking them for real skin.²⁴ Some terracotta figurines show signs of pigment on the leggings, in colors including flesh pink, yellow, yellow brown, orange, red, and red brown, with the more neutral colors predominating. Another indication that realism was not the first priority is that the color of the tights does not always match the color of the actor’s mask.²⁵ On Paestan pottery (see [Figure 8](#)), the sleeves and leggings have a characteristic vertical stripe down their length; worn together with the contrasting leotard mentioned earlier, they look as much like a clown suit as a body.²⁶ The Paestan costume, while somewhat anomalous, simply takes to greater lengths the bodily artificiality inherent in other representations of comic costume.²⁷

Attached to the *somation* is the best-known element of the male comic body, the phallus. Like the body padding, the phallus is nearly universal on male

characters in depictions of comic performances through the middle of the fourth century. This overwhelming evidence from the archaeological record has put to rest any attempts by earlier scholars to deny or downplay the use of the phallus.²⁸ Outlandishly long and usually flaccid, it is visible whether or not the character is dressed. It is either left dangling between the character's legs or rolled up in the style sometimes called infibulated; the Phanagoria chous (Figure 5) shows both styles. Even in the rolled-up state, the phallus is still normally visible beneath the hem of the actor's short tunic (see Figure 2). The best description of the comic phallus comes from the parabasis of *Clouds* (537–9):

ὥς δὲ σώφρων ἐστὶ φύσει σκέψασθ' ἥτις πρῶτα μὲν
οὐδὲν ἦλθε ῥαψαμένη σκῦτινον καθειμένον,
ἐρυθρόν ἐξ ἄκρου, παχύ, τοῖς παιδίοις ἴν' ἢ γέλως·

And consider how modest in nature [my comedy] is, which first
hasn't come with a leather thing stitched on, dangling,
red on the tip, thick, to be a joke for the kiddies.

From this passage we learn the usual material of the comic phallus (leather), its color (red), and the means used to attach it to the *somation* (stitching).²⁹ The standard comic phallus as depicted in art is neither the oversized erect member of satyrs nor the small discreet penis of athletic nudes. Instead it has its own set of significances on the comic stage. On a practical level, it must be large enough to be visible from around the theater. In its excessive size it matches the other grotesquely outsized body parts worn by the actor. Additionally, it marks the character as male and serves as a visual link to the phallus used in Dionysiac processions.³⁰ We consider more about the onstage use and significance of the phallus in later sections. What the vase paintings and terracottas make clear, though, is that the phallus is nearly always at least partially on view. Also apparent in the vase paintings but virtually ignored by scholars is that testicles, too, are part of the male comic actor's costume and are most often quite exposed, even when the character is clothed.

Thus the male comic *somation* presents a paradox of exposure and concealment. Its visible genitalia and protruding body parts represent the exposed body, made all the more striking in contrast with the well-wrapped and modestly proportioned “draped youths” who appear on the reverse of so many comic vases. Yet the *somation* too is a covering, which steadfastly and completely conceals a real person underneath. The *actor's* body remains entirely hidden, head to ankle, by this bottom layer of costume.³¹ Only his hands, and sometimes his feet, are left uncovered. Aristophanic comedy may give the impression that absolutely nothing is exempt from its relentless exposure, but at its own actors it draws the line. Comedy revels in bodily functions and corporeality, yet it is always the character's body, not the actor's, that is the butt of those jokes. Although the comic body can be fondled, probed, beaten, or used for

gestures of all sorts, there is absolutely no indication in extant plays, fragments, monuments, or vase paintings that any part of the *somation* or mask of a speaking actor is ever actually removed onstage.³² As much as the comic body is itself a costume, and markedly so, still it is treated differently in this important respect from the other parts of the comic costume, like the *himation* or shoes, which are frequently taken on and off.

While we are never allowed to permeate that bottom layer of costume, we are constantly reminded that it is manifestly fake, literally a put-on.³³ When vase painters and coroplasts highlight this artificiality, they represent visually what we can glean from our comic texts: comedy hardly even tries to maintain an illusion of reality, constantly reminding its audience of the fictitious nature of its spectacle. The patent artificiality of comic representations stands in marked contrast to artists' realistic depiction of tragic scenes, in which the mask is invisible and no clear lines are drawn between the character and the actor, the myth and its enactment.³⁴ This artificiality is a crucial way in which comic bodies are distinguished from tragic ones. Scholars such as Piqueux and Revermann have rightly emphasized that the grotesque body is a generic signifier that instantly marks a character as belonging to (and sometimes appropriated into) the world of comedy. Nevertheless, artists mark the genre of comedy not simply by the grotesque silhouette itself but also by the fabricated nature of the performance.³⁵ To be comic is to be both grotesque and artificial; the two are inextricably linked and equally indicative of the comic genre.

Scholarship on the (male) comic body has focused primarily on its relationship to the notion of the ideal Athenian citizen. John Winkler has suggested that the oversized comic phallus and grotesque body padding mark these characters as anticitizens.³⁶ Helene Foley has modified his view, noting that these grotesque characters nevertheless frequently claim to be citizens and to represent the interests of citizens. Foley argues that the artificiality of costume, paired with the frequency of disguising in Aristophanes' plays, signifies that these are in fact "citizens in disguise."³⁷ Foley's argument emphasizes the distancing power of the costume's patent artificiality, a feature that surely made it possible for actual male citizens to play these roles without shame. Yet as Revermann points out, comic ugliness extends beyond male citizen characters to characters who are slaves, gods, and women, all of whom can be appropriated into the comic world by the power of it grotesque representations.³⁸ There is more in play here than Athenian notions of conduct (un)becoming a citizen. Nancy Worman, in turn, has focused on the gaping mouth of the comic mask, which often emblemizes voracious appetites and abusive speech; the mouth and the rest of the grotesque comic body, in Worman's view, establish an image that is "effectively apotropaic in its monitory challenge."³⁹ This comic imagery of bodily excess is then appropriated by real-life Athenian

orators to defame their opponents. Worman's analysis plays a significant role in the discussion of *Knights* later in this chapter.

Several further ramifications of comic artificiality merit consideration. First, the artificial *somation* alters the nature of bodily actions and manipulations onstage. Actions that might appear prurient or even downright pornographic when staged with a live actor's body – say, making a suggestive gesture with a penis, or probing the genitalia of young girls, to take two examples from *Acharnians* alone – are in some way mediated by the layer of artificiality interposed by the grotesque body costume. It is impossible for us to know to what extent that mediation occurred in the minds of Athenian viewers, but a passage from Xenophon's *Symposium* indicates that Athenians did feel a distinction between an artificial performance and “the real thing.” When a mimed (i.e., unmasked) version of the union of Ariadne and Dionysus is performed at the symposium recounted by Xenophon, the transfixed viewers are particularly stirred, first, by the beauty of the performers and, second, by the fact that the performers are “not mocking but really kissing with their mouths.”⁴⁰ The effect of an onstage kiss between masked, grotesquely padded characters would, by implication, be markedly different. Myrrhine's seduction of her husband Cinesias in *Lysistrata*, for example, is much less titillating and Cinesias's desperately enamored reaction all the more laughable when we imagine that both of their bodies are distorted and fake.⁴¹

Second, the costumed-yet-nude male comic body flies in the face of a commonly accepted notion that artificiality and concealment of the body are associated with women in particular. An examination of comic vase paintings forces us to dispense (at least for comedy) with any simple equation in which nudity is male and heroic, while concealment and artificiality are female and suspect. Not only is the male comic body not idealized, but, even when exposed, it is not really nude. Indeed, as Foley has pointed out, the athletic male body is virtually absent from the stage in any genre.⁴² As presented in vase paintings and terracotta figurines, male comic characters uniformly display the falseness of their bodies. In fact, as I argue later, they do so even more than female characters do. To wear and even flaunt multiple layers, beginning with the body itself, is the essence of what it is to do comedy.

A final, more speculative conclusion I draw about comic artificiality involves its contrast with tragedy. In *Mask and Performance in Greek Tragedy*, David Wiles has put forth a strong argument for the transformative effect of the mask in performances of Greek tragedy.⁴³ His evidence includes encounters with the tragic mask in Greek vase painting, which depict a process of transformation, where the actor becomes the character and the performance becomes the myth.⁴⁴ As Wiles frames the issue, this merging of actor and character is not simply a matter of keeping the dramatic illusion intact; rather, it evokes the very nature of masked performance,

which, in Wiles's view, fifth-century Greeks saw as a religiously inspired and transporting experience. Artistic depictions of comedy, of course, present us with quite a different perspective. The alienation that Wiles finds missing in fifth-century encounters with the tragic mask is precisely the distancing that we do find in visual renderings of comic performances.⁴⁵ If, as Wiles suggests, the transformative power of the tragic mask leads participants away from their normal identities, perhaps the distancing effect of comic costume (and comedy's cavalier approach to illusion in general) enables participants to begin detaching themselves from that experience. Thus, just as Edith Hall has argued that the satyr play restores a sense of collective masculinity among the citizen audience after the feminizing emotions of tragedy, perhaps comedy begins redrawing the lines between what is real and what is not.⁴⁶

The Female Comic Body

The iconic comic body is by default male. This may explain why scholars have had so little to say about the female comic body. As J. R. Green observes, a female character never appears alone on a vase as a representative of comedy, as male comic figures so often do.⁴⁷ There is no distinctively female body shape used for female comic characters on vases or terracottas, at least until the appearance of comic *hetairai* on vases of the mid- to late fourth century.⁴⁸ In Old Comedy, the female *somation* is essentially the male *somation* – padded belly, rump, and breasts – but wearing women's clothing and a female mask.⁴⁹ Confusion about this point led earlier scholars to interpret all female terracotta figurines with swollen stomachs as pregnant women, until it was recognized that they were just wearing the normal padded comic stomach.⁵⁰ Even the phallus may have been worn continuously by actors who would switch back and forth between male and female roles within one play, with the phallus hidden underneath the floor-length dress of female characters.⁵¹

Our effort to visualize the female body as staged in Old Comedy is hampered by two other factors. First, depictions of female comic characters in art of all fabrics, periods, and regions are relatively rare. There exists only one surviving fifth-century Attic representation of a comic female, the goddess Nike, and this turns out to be a bit problematic, as we will see.⁵² Green calculates that fewer than 15 percent of comic characters on fifth- and fourth-century vases are female.⁵³ This scarcity of depictions corresponds well with the relatively small number of female roles in our comic texts. Yet, as we will see in later sections, women's bodies are hardly ignored on the comic stage; the exposure and handling of female (costume) bodies is rather common in Aristophanic comedy. As we try to envision how these women's bodies were represented, we stumble upon a curious problem that has not yet been sufficiently explained: vase



9. Philotimides, Charis, and Xanthias. Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 400–380. Detail. Milan, Civico Museo Archeologico AO.9.284.

Photograph © Civico Museo Archeologico di Milano, Italy.

painters do not as consistently present female characters on the comic stage in the same degree of somatic artificiality as they do male comic characters. In other words, they do not always explicitly show the *somation*, or even the mask, of women on the comic stage. This inconsistency in the depiction of female characters deserves our attention.

Some female characters do fit the model of somatic artificiality that we have seen exhibited by male characters. As I have mentioned, the most common method used to depict female comic characters on vases is to render them in the same manner as male comic characters, except that they wear women's clothes and masks. In other words, these female characters are distinguished not by body shape but by mask and, above all, by female clothing – that is, the ankle-length *chiton*, often with a *himation* covering their heads. This clothing is worn on top of the padded *somation*. For example, the seated figure in the “Reckoning” krater (Figure 1) is recognizable as female by her long robe and her female mask, but her *somation* resembles that of the male characters. The central figure of another early fourth-century Apulian bell-krater, a woman labeled Charis, is fully draped, with a *himation* covering her head and arms, and her dress extending to her ankles (Figure 9).⁵⁴ Similar is the fully covered woman being propositioned by a man with extended phallus in an Apulian bell-krater, c. 375–350, dubbed “Dirty Old Man” (Figure 10).⁵⁵ This masked,



10. Actor with crooked cane and woman. Apulian red-figure bell-krater, attributed to the Judgment Painter, fourth century B.C.E. Atlanta, Michael C. Carlos Museum L1989.2.2. Lent by Mr. William Knight Zewadski.

© Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University.

padded, well-covered style is the standard rendering for female terracotta figurines as well. In each of these cases, the same wrist-length sleeves that we have seen representing the *somation* of male characters are also visible on female characters.⁵⁶ On a Lucanian bell-krater from the first half of the fourth century, a *hetaira* with grotesque mask leans against a column, pulling her *himation* back off of her head and leaving it open to the waist to reveal what is either a very see-through *chiton* or the torso of the *somation* itself; in any case, her arm and shins show the wrinkled *somation*.⁵⁷ Aside from the *hetaira* last mentioned, this type of female body is more covered than the male, just as one might expect in Athenian real life as well. As Stone observes, the heavy clothing has the further advantage of concealing the male actor underneath.⁵⁸

Against these women in their obvious stage costumes, we can compare other depictions of women on the comic stage in lesser degrees of explicit artificiality. In some instances, they are depicted with comic masks but with “real” bodies. This type of mismatch can usually be explained as deriving from iconographic



11. Comic Nike and Heracles ride a chariot. Attic red-figure chous, c. 410. Paris, Musée du Louvre N3408; M9.

© RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY. Photo: Hervé Lewandowski.

motivations. The earliest appearance of a woman in an apparently comic scene is the late fifth-century Attic chous with Nike driving a centaur-drawn chariot in which Heracles rides (Figure 11).⁵⁹ Nike has a comic mask but a normal female physique. Her arms are bare female arms, with no wrinkled *somation* indicated. Because the same is true of the Heracles figure – grotesque mask and marked musculature but no sign of *somation* – we might conclude that somehow the noncomic iconography of both Nike and Heracles has persisted to be contrasted with the mask.⁶⁰ (A third figure on the vase, a naked dancing male with two sticks, is wearing a *somation*.) The same bare female arms can be seen on the two grotesquely masked women labeled ΝΥΜΦΑΙ (Nymphs) in the upper right of the “Cheiron” Apulian bell-krater of c. 380, which receives its nickname from the central figure labeled ΧΙΡΩΝ who is being pushed up the stairs (Figure 12).⁶¹ The women’s relationship to the slapstick action in the main field of the krater is difficult to assess, as is that of the fully wrapped and nongrotesque young man at right. In the case of the comic “nymphs,” as with Nike in Figure 11, it is as though an element of the noncomic iconography, in this case beautiful young nymphs, is retained and stands juxtaposed with the ugly masks. A third and more complicated example of this conflation of comic mask and “real” female body is the masked woman who comes running in from the left to fill her wine bowl in the now-famous Würzburg Telephus



12. Cheiron is pushed up the stairs. Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 380. London, The British Museum 1849, 0620.13 (F 151).

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bell-krater depicting a scene from *Women at the Thesmophoria* (Figure 13).⁶² Her arms, too, are bare, with no *somation*. We know that this character has a brief speaking role in the play, and therefore must have been acted by a man. Why does she not wear a *somation*? As in the other two cases, perhaps here too the noncomic iconography, in this case the Telephus scene, where the figure of Clytemnestra is often present, had some influence.⁶³ More likely,



13. Comic Telephus scene. Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c.370s. Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum H 5697.

© Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg. Photo: P. Neckermann.

the vase painter may also have been motivated by a desire to help the viewer sort out the complex layers of gender in this scene: within the play's fiction, this woman (unlike the Telephus/Relative character) is a "real" woman. In each of these three vases presenting mixed female artificiality, then, the "real" female body with masked face most likely serves iconographic goals rather than reflecting actual stage practice. These portrayals of female characters serve as good reminders of the challenges of deducing stage practice from representation in vase painting.

What, then, to make of the completely "real" female figures that accompany artificially padded comic males on some vases? One type of woman depicted in comic scenes is an unmasked, naturalistically rendered flute player (*auletris*) who accompanies masked, *somation*-clad male comic characters. On an Apulian bell-krater of c. 375–350 (Figure 14), the *auletris* leads the way for two comic characters who carry bread on a spit above their heads (hence the nickname Obeliaphoroi, "spit-bread carriers").⁶⁴ All three figures are onstage together, but the two males are grotesquely masked and suited, while she wears neither mask nor *somation* and is of nongrotesque appearance. Three



14. Two comic actors carry bread on a spit and follow a flute player. Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 375–350. St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum inv. B-2074. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets.

other representations offer similar pairings of comic males with noncomic female flute players.⁶⁵ On a Campanian bell-krater dated to c. 350–325, the *auletris* interacts with a comic male to the left while another comic male sits to the right and eats a fish.⁶⁶ On another Campanian bell-krater from the same period, a comic actor with two torches looks back at a female flute-player.⁶⁷ In both of these cases, the female figure is unmasked, clothed in a normal robe without *somation*, and of nongrotesque proportions, as in Figure 14. In a third Campanian vase, an *auletris*, wearing the *phorbeia* (headpiece of a piper) and dressed just as the official *auletes* (male flute player) in long, decorated robe, stands below the stage but is nevertheless accosted by a comic character bearing a torch, while another comic male stands further to the right.⁶⁸ Lest we think that this is only a southern Italian phenomenon, the Attic relief discussed earlier (Figure 3) seems to depict an *auletris* with a comic chorus, although the upper body and face have not survived. These *auletrides* suggest at least the possibility that nonspeaking performer roles were represented onstage in quite

a different manner from the grotesquely shaped speaking characters who sport obvious layers of costume.

The female flute players share this nongrotesque appearance in common with the production's official (male) *auletes*, who is also set apart from the grotesquerie of the comic performance. On vase paintings and presumably in the theater itself, the finely decorated robes and slim physique of the *auletes*, as well as the absence of a mask and his typical position to one side of the action, separate him from the comic actors.⁶⁹ Indeed, within the context of comic representations, the nonpadded form and fine garment of the *aulos* player create such a resemblance to female figures that it is sometimes difficult to determine an *aulos* player's sex.⁷⁰ Yet while there exist depictions of grotesquely costumed male actors – not the official *auletes* – playing flutes onstage (see [Figure 19](#) and the “Bari Pipers” calyx-krater cited in [note 69](#)), I know of no surviving examples of grotesquely costumed female characters playing the flute.

Another type of female performer depicted not only naturalistically but also nude is the acrobat. Two Paestan vases present striking visual contrasts between a fully covered male comic actor and a nude or nearly nude female performer. While again we apply the caveat that the Paestan material is the furthest removed from Attic stage practice, nevertheless its manner of representing female figures in comic contexts bears some similarity to the *auletrides*. One such vase, a red-figure skyphos dated to c. 350–325, depicts a female acrobat standing on her hands on a potter's wheel that has been positioned on a comic stage, while a male character in comic costume holds a cord that turns the wheel ([Figure 15](#)).⁷¹ This trim female is unmasked and unclothed except for a translucent pair of short-shorts through which her pubic region is visible (or on which it has been painted). There are no sleeves or wrinkled tights: this is depicted as “real” nudity. Another Paestan vase (a red-figure calyx-krater, c. 350) also presents a female acrobat in remarkably similar pose ([Figure 16](#)).⁷² This acrobat, completely nude and startlingly white, performs a handstand on a stool that has been placed onstage. To the right of the acrobat are two male characters in comic costume, one of them gawking at the acrobat's midriff quite intently, the other looking up more nonchalantly as he leans against a post or wall. One cannot help but be reminded of the Aristophanic scenes in which a pair of characters, one more clownish than the other, ogle an attractive female. The stooped, elderly body of the gawking actor contrasts with the youthful fitness of the acrobat; likewise the bulk of his costume contrasts with her completely bare body. Above the acrobat are two windows, in each of which a female masked comic head appears in profile, looking toward the center. The windows and the elaborately rendered stage platform mark this as part of a comic performance.⁷³



15. Acrobat on a wheel, turned by a comic actor. Paestan red-figure skyphos, c. 350–325. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum AN1945.43.

Photo courtesy of Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Vase painting thus presents a full range of female bodies on the comic stage, from grotesquely masked, fully covered, and manifestly artificial to unmasked, idealized, and “real.” Aside from the vases I have mentioned, at least five others present non-padded, maskless female figures in comic contexts.⁷⁴ Thus in roughly one-quarter of the comic scenes that include women, the women are depicted naturalistically.⁷⁵ Their bare skin contrasts with the multilayered costume of the male characters, creating an inversion of the standard representation of nude male and clothed female in classical Greek art. It is possible, of course, that the paintings reflect actual stage practice, and, as some have suggested, real women played certain nonspeaking roles in Old Comedy.⁷⁶ Yet the nonphotographic nature of vase painting, as well as the temporal and geographic distances between Athenian Old Comedy and some of the evidence cited earlier, prevents us from drawing a direct line to stage practice. What we can conclude with certainty is that vase painters chose to represent certain female performers as somehow standing outside the grotesquerie and artificiality of the comic performance.⁷⁷ If the grotesque and the artificial are inextricably linked in comic scenes, as I have suggested, it makes some sense that nongrotesque females (i.e., the attractive ones) would be rendered as



16. Acrobat observed by two comic actors, Dionysus, and two women in windows. Paestan red-figure calyx-krater, c. 350. Lipari, Museo Archeologico Luigi Bernabò Brea inv. 927. Regione Sicilia, Dipartimento per i Beni Culturali, Museo Archeologico Regionale Luigi Bernabò Brea – Lipari (ME) – Italy.

also nonartificial. Whether real women or men playing the part, these women could be *seen* as real. This picture is reinforced when we examine the actual encounters of comic bodies in our surviving texts and find that some women's artificiality is highlighted much more than others'.



17. Aegisthus with comic Choregoi and Pyrrhias. Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 400–380. Naples, Museo Nazionale 248778.

Photograph courtesy of Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli.

The Tragic Body on the Comic Stage

The juxtaposition of idealized female figures with grotesquely costumed male ones has a powerful visual effect. We have also seen that the official *auletes* in his noncomic garb stands apart, literally and figuratively, from the padded comic actors. Male comic actors in grotesque *somatia* are sometimes juxtaposed on vases with another type of stage body, the tragic figure. For example, in the early fourth-century Apulian red-figure bell-krater known as the Choregoi vase (Figure 17), an elegant figure labeled “Aigisthos,” in fine flowing tragic dress and boots, serves as a visual foil to the three masked, padded, phallus-wearing comic actors to his right.⁷⁸ One figure, labeled “Choregos,” is presented in profile with the jaw of his comic mask jutting prominently; he leans on his staff in a posture that emphasizes his protruding rump. A second masked figure, labeled “Pyrrhias,” is depicted in full frontal position, with the distinctively comic wedge-shaped beard pointing down to his long, dangling phallus and testicles. The rightmost figure, another masked “Choregos” with prominent rear end, also leans on his staff, but faces forward enough that the artist can also render a breast as well. Each bulge in the comic *somation* receives its due

attention on this vase, all in contrast to the Aegisthus figure. He is presented as tragic actors typically are: as “real.” A similar juxtaposition of comic and tragic bodies appears on the New York Goose Play krater (Figure 6). There a young, nude athletic male, somewhat mysteriously labeled ΤΡΑΓΟΙΔΟC (tragic performer), offers a contrast to the ridiculous comic “nudes” with their wrinkled *somatia* and grotesque shapes.⁷⁹

Depictions like these remind us of the strong visual component of paratragic humor in the productions of Old Comedy. A character who lacks the comic silhouette is instantly recognizable as an intruder into the genre, even before he speaks a paratragic word.⁸⁰ For example, the tragic poet Agathon in *Women at the Thesmophoria* stands out with just this kind of visual incongruity. The Relative reacts to Agathon’s appearance with a long series of questions about incongruous items of clothing and props.⁸¹ Finally he zeroes in on the elements of comic costume that are missing (*Thesm.* 141–3):

σύ τ’ αὐτός, ὦ παῖ, πότερον ὡς ἀνὴρ τρέφει;
καὶ ποῦ πέος; ποῦ χλαῖνα; ποῦ Λακωνικά;
ἀλλ’ ὡς γυνὴ δῆτ’; εἶτα ποῦ τὰ τιτθία;

And you yourself, boy, were you raised as a man?
And where then is your cock? Where is your cloak? Where are your
Laconian boots?
But as a woman, then? Then where are your tits?

These words that the Relative speaks in reaction to Agathon’s appearance could just as easily apply to Aegisthus on the Choregoi krater (Figure 17). Representatives of tragedy like Aegisthus on the Choregoi vase and Agathon in *Women at the Thesmophoria* lack the paraphernalia that would mark them as comic – the phallus, padded breasts, and comic garb. In the inverted world of comedy, the bulges of the comic body become normative, and elegant characters like Aegisthus or Agathon are found lacking.⁸² Thus, while the comic poet can appropriate tragic or heroic figures into the comic world by endowing them with comic ugliness as Revermann has argued, the poet can also choose to highlight these characters’ outsider status by denying them the attributes that mark them as fully comic.⁸³ In the complex interweaving of gender and genre in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, a subject to which we will return at greater length in Chapter 4, this generic deficiency is cast as gender indeterminacy.

Attractive female figures and tragic figures have this in common, then: they both can stand in opposition to the comic male body. Vase painters mark this distinction not only with nongrotesque body shape but also by effacing the mask and bodysuit of the noncomic characters. That some female characters and tragic figures share this interloper status may help facilitate the gendering of tragedy as female in plays such as *Women at the Thesmophoria*.

SOME USES OF THE BODY IN EXTANT PLAYS

When we examine the references to the comic body costume in the extant plays and fragments, we find that the plays' words highlight costume in ways that overlap with but do not completely coincide with the emphases of vase painters and coroplasts. For example, the body stocking that is so ubiquitous and heavily marked by vase painters is hardly mentioned in the texts. It is, presumably, simply a given of the comic stage. Similarly, as Stone has already noted, if we had only texts, we could prove only that *some* male characters in Aristophanic comedy wore phalluses. While an onstage phallus is mentioned in almost every play of Aristophanes, it is only the archaeological evidence that makes clear that the phallus was worn by all male characters, with very few exceptions.⁸⁴ Likewise, the texts mention only female breasts, never male ones, while the material evidence shows that padding around the breasts was common for male characters as well. The reason for these seeming discrepancies is that the comic texts typically mention a part of the costume only when it is somehow exceptional, is part of a verbal pun, or is physically handled onstage. Thus while we know from the archaeological record that the masks of adult male characters were bearded as a norm, beards are mentioned in the plays only when they are notably absent (Agathon, Cleisthenes), unique (Pseudartabas in *Acharnians*, the Spartan ambassadors in *Lysistrata*), removed onstage (the Relative in *Women at the Thesmophoria*), or donned onstage (the women in *Assemblywomen*). To put it another way, the vase paintings and terracottas show us the constants of costume, while the texts highlight the specific uses of the costume at any given moment, as though turning the spotlight temporarily on something that has been there all along.

This spotlight of verbal reference is aimed at various parts of the body costume for various purposes. The gaping comic mouth can represent gluttonous appetite, too-voluble speech, or fatuousness.⁸⁵ References to the padded belly and rump can mark a character as a *bomolochos* (clown, buffoon). For example, the body of Dionysus in *Frogs* is unusually prominent in the words of our text. He is called γάστρων (belly, or fatso) by Charon at 200; his backside gets sore at 221–2; his whipping by Aeacus culminates in a request that he proffer his belly to be lashed (663); at 1280, he claims that the verbal blows have made his kidneys (or, by double entendre, his testicles)⁸⁶ sore. A similar constellation of bomolochic bodily references surrounds Strepsiades, whose understanding of the world around him comes mostly by way of analogy to the workings of his intestines (*Clouds* 385–93, 421, etc.). It is hard to imagine staging this scene's gastrointestinal metaphors without some gestures to his padded belly. And, of course, the bomolochic potential of the comic costume is elevated (or lowered) to the level of controlling theme in *Knights*, where the grotesque silhouette continually offers visual confirmation of broader comic themes of gluttony



18. Comic soldiers. Campanian red-figure bell-krater, c. 350–325. Naples, Museo Nazionale 81926.

Photograph courtesy of Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli.

and sexual license. In *Wealth*, the body of the slave Cario is frequently referenced (e.g., testicles at 311, farting and inflated stomach at 699). Thus *Wealth* gives us a taste of what is to come in New Comedy, where slaves retain their grotesque shape, but the phallus and padding disappear from other characters.

Coexisting with this clownish buffoonery signified by the body is a more positive connotation, in which the ample, full comic body represents a kind of utopian plenitude.⁸⁷ This use of the comic *somation* can be seen at the end of *Acharnians*, where the world of feasting and the world of military service are brought into contrast through the experiences of Dicaeopolis and Lamachus. At one point in their stichomythic exchange, Dicaeopolis points to his stomach as the counterpart to Lamachus's shield (1122–3). John Porter has revived a suggestion that in the line immediately preceding this (1120–1), Lamachus's reference to his spear is countered by Dicaeopolis's gesture to his own phallus.⁸⁸ A Campanian bell-krater, c. 350–325, depicts a similar juxtaposition of comic belly to shield and phallus to spear (Figure 18).⁸⁹ The padded stomachs of the stage-nude comic actors are visually parallel to the large shield held

in the scene; the curvature of bellies and shield is identical, and the navel marked on the bellies parallels the boss on the shield. Although the painter has removed the actors from their theatrical setting and rendered the costumes with unusual white sleeves, the vase at least suggests how a painter could imagine the comic body costume in juxtaposition with military equipment, as occurs in *Acharnians*. As the feasting and drinking in *Acharnians* continue, Dicaeopolis's belly becomes further identified with the image of the wine-skin. As Piqueux has observed, uses of the belly such as this have less to do with clownishness than they do with the embodiment of the utopian ideal of plenitude.⁹⁰

The phallus is the part of the body costume most often directly referenced in surviving plays of Aristophanes.⁹¹ Not surprisingly, the phallus is often the locus of costume interaction in sexually charged encounters with female characters. The *Acharnians* chorus best expresses the desirability of such phallic contact: in contrast with Lamachus shivering on his military patrol, Dicaeopolis will be sleeping with a lovely young girl, getting his “thingie” rubbed (ἀνατριβομένῳ γε τὸ δεινόν, *Ach.* 1149). Dicaeopolis soon thereafter experiences this contact onstage when he returns with two dancing girls and orders them both to take hold of his phallus (1216–17).⁹² The scene with the dancing girls in *Acharnians* represents the culmination of a very phallocentric play: the Odomantians' circumcised members are observed (158, 161); Dicaeopolis oversees a phallic procession and performs a song in honor of Phales (237–79); Dicaeopolis comments on Lamachus's “equipment” (591–2); the scene with the Megarian's pig-gies involves a phallic double entendre (785–7); and Dicaeopolis offers a bride some ointment to put on the phallus of her bridegroom (1058–66).

While phallic gratification can indicate the protagonist's success, conversely a character's failures and letdowns can also be represented in phallic terms. Poor bumbling Strepsiades has only his phallus in his own hand at *Clouds* 733–4; no flute girls or dancing girls for him.⁹³ At the end of *Wasps*, Philocleon speaks of his phallus as a “rotten rope,” and the flute girl that he has stolen won't give him the gratification he wants (1341–50). The “Dirty Old Man” bell-krater (Figure 10), which shows a male comic character extending his phallus to a well-covered and apparently horrified female character, may represent an unsuccessful attempt of this type. In another variation on this motif at the conclusion of *Birds*, Peisetaerus's instructions to Basileia to “hold onto my wings” (1760–1) transfers the standard phallus-grabbing action onto wings, the costume element that has been the central image of the play.⁹⁴ In *Women at the Thesmophoria*, both the Relative and the Scythian archer struggle to contain their phalluses (643–8, 1187); and virtually the entire male cast of *Lysistrata* suffers from painful erections.

These multiple references to the phallus make implausible Foley's statement that there is a “remarkably small number of comic scenes where there is an



19. Three comic actors on a merry-go-round, one with flute. Apulian oinochoe, c. 375–350. Reported Syracuse N.Y., but whereabouts unknown. Photograph courtesy of Alan Hughes.

almost certain reference to the stage phallus.”⁹⁵ On the contrary, the phallus figures also in masturbation jokes (*Knights* 29, *Clouds* 733–4), impotence jokes (*Wasps* 714, *Ass.* 620–2), circumcision jokes (*Ach.* 158, 161, *Wealth* 295), erection jokes (*Ach.* 1120–1, *Thesm.* 157–8, *Lys.* passim), threats of rape (*Birds* 1253–6), promises of sex (*Ass.* 1048), and various other uses and gestures (e.g., it can substitute as Trygaeus’s rudder at *Peace* 142). Vase paintings such as the Apulian red-figure oinochoe, c. 375–350, in which a character plays a flute in very close proximity to another character’s upturned phallus (while both are on a kind of merry-go-round and a third character watches from the left) confirm the creative use to which the phallus could be put onstage (Figure 19).⁹⁶ Other vases depicting vigorous activity, such as the Cheiron krater (Figure 12) or the St. Petersburg Obeliaphoroi krater (Figure 14), show how the loosely swinging phallus could enhance the visual humor of wild slapstick scenes. In light of such evidence, we should not overlook the pure comic potential of a nearly knee-length leather apparatus between the actor’s legs.

In contrast with the multiplicity of functions of the male comic body, the female comic body, on the other hand, serves in the early plays of Aristophanes almost exclusively as the object of male desire. The female body appears most notably in the stock scenes in which an attractive woman or two appears onstage, to be ogled and fondled by the male character(s). This type of encounter typically occurs at the end of a play (*Acharnians*, *Knights*, and *Women at the Thesmophoria*), or at the play's midpoint, after the successful accomplishment of the protagonist's plan (after Peace has been attained in *Peace* and once the birds have been won over in *Birds*). Like the beautiful women who flank the victor in the trophy ceremony of an auto race, these women signify the sexual rewards available to a successful male. In Attic comedy, though, the experience tends to be both visual (*Peace* 887 ὀρᾶτε, 888 σκέψασθ', 891 ὀρᾶτ'; *Birds* 664 θεασώμεσθα, 666 ἐπιδείκνυ; cf. *Lys.* 1157) and also rather tactile. The male character typically handles or anticipates handling the woman's breasts (*Ach.* 1199, *Peace* 863, *Thesm.* 1185) or her buttocks (*Peace* 868, 875–6, 879–80; cf. *Thesm.* 1187), and receives kisses from her (*Ach.* 1200–1, 1209; *Peace* 709; *Birds* 671–4; *Thesm.* 1190–2).⁹⁷ The speaker of Cratinus fr. 335 sums up the experience: "How soft and delicate her skin was, o gods! For I even felt her up and she didn't even think anything of it."⁹⁸ In some cases, the bodily contact is focused onto a more minor, less respectable female character, like Procne in *Birds* or Theoria in *Peace*, while greater reverence and less physical contact are reserved for idealized figures like Basileia and Peace herself.

In the later plays of Aristophanes, we find an inversion of the ogling-and-fondling scenario: the body of an old, grotesque woman is viewed with disgust by a young man, who recoils at the thought of having sex with her. In striking contrast to the ogling scenes, these revulsion scenes pay special attention to the mask of the ugly woman. Consider, for example, the scene late in *Assemblywomen* where three increasingly hideous old women each claim priority in having sex with a young man. As each woman appears, her ugly face receives special attention: the first announces that she has plastered her face with lead (878; cf. 996); the second is described as an Empousa (a bogeywoman) covered in bloody blisters (1055–6); when the third appears, the young man asks whether she might be a monkey full of lead paint (1072). As Niall Slater has shown, the repeated references to white-ground lekythoi, used as funeral offerings, lay special emphasis on the white masks of the old women, linking them metaphorically to death.⁹⁹ While a bright and unflattering spotlight is turned on the masks of the older women, the same does not apply to the beautiful young woman who competes for the man's affection in this play; her face is never mentioned, and we can only assume that her mask is not supposed to be "seen."¹⁰⁰ In *Wealth*, too, the body and especially the mask of an old woman is the center of attention: her hands (1018), her skin (1020), her

facial expression (βλέμμα, 1022), her padded stomach (implied by 1037), her gray hair (1043), the wrinkles on her πρόσωπον (1051), her missing teeth (1056–9), the white paint that covers “the rags of her face/mask” (τοῦ προσώπου τὰ ῥάκη, 1065), her breasts (1067–8), and her derriere (in the double entendre at 1093). As with the three hags in *Assemblywomen*, there is no doubting the grotesquerie of this costume, or its artificiality. Nowhere else in Aristophanes is the mask more self-consciously referenced than it is here with the phrase τοῦ προσώπου τὰ ῥάκη (1065), which explicitly mentions the material out of which a mask was made.

Thus the embodiments of desirable women and repulsive women represent two divergent approaches to female bodies in Aristophanes: desirable women have their masks effaced, conveniently ignored (or are not fake at all, if played by real women);¹⁰¹ ugly women have the most marked artificiality, particularly with regard to the mask, of any character in Aristophanes. This pattern converges with what we have observed on vases as well: the attractive women are “real,” the grotesquely comic ones false. While the male body costume can perform a multitude of functions, signifying clownishness, plenitude, grotesque excess, or sexual success, or simply offering slapstick humor, the female body is typically seen from the point of view of desirability or lack thereof. But the fullest exposure of and interplay with the comic bodies of either sex comes in *Lysistrata*, to which we turn our attention at the end of this chapter.

THE BODY IMPOLITIC: *KNIGHTS*

Knights presents the (male) comic body at its most base, forgoing all possible festive, utopian, or exuberant connotations to focus on gluttony and gaping orifices.¹⁰² In this play, a demagogue named Paphlagon – a thinly veiled representation of the real political figure Cleon – meets his match in an abusive contest of gluttonous demagoguery against the only figure in Athens more debased than he is, a Sausage-Seller. The two trade insults, they trade blows, and ultimately they compete for the favor of Demos, an allegorical representation of the Athenian body politic. Unremittingly violent and vituperative, nevertheless *Knights* took first prize in the comic competition at the Lenaea of 424 and earned its playwright bragging rights for his courage in taking on the hated Cleon.

The main function of costume in *Knights* is to represent in grotesque visual form the bodily metaphors that are central to the play. Or, to put it another way, the comic body costume itself is the vehicle (perhaps even the inspiration) for the play’s metaphors. Clothing itself receives little attention in this play, figuring in only one brief passage (881–94) and in a concluding scene that reverses and mitigates some of the bodily grotesquerie that has dominated the

play. Otherwise, no mention is made at all of what any of the characters are wearing.¹⁰³ Neither does the phallus function prominently in *Knights*, somewhat surprisingly since a Sausage-Seller as the protagonist would seem to offer many opportunities for phallic double entendre.¹⁰⁴ Instead, *Knights* focuses most of its attention on the mouth, stomach, and πρωκτός (anus, asshole) of its antagonists. The gaping mouth of the comic mask serves a dual purpose in this play: together with the padded stomach, it emblemizes the gluttony of all parties involved; furthermore, together with the anus, which in this play is viewed primarily as a corollary orifice widened by misuse, the gaping mouth embodies the obnoxious speech of the demagogue. Physical and verbal abuse, then, are the primary ways that costume is contested in *Knights*. We turn our attention first to gluttony and the stomach, then to the mouth-anus corollary.

The padded comic stomach serves as a constant visual representation of the relentless theme of gluttony in *Knights*, where Paphlagon's rapacious thefts from the people are presented as food stealing, and both characters try to bribe Demos with food. The stomach first of all symbolizes the greed of the demagogue. For example, the Sausage-Seller denounces Paphlagon for "running into the Prytaneum with an empty gut and then back out with a full one" (κενῇ τῇ κοιλίᾳ εἰσδραμὼν εἰς τὸ πρυτανεῖον, εἴτα πάλιν ἐκθεῖ πλέα, 280–1). Not only is Paphlagon himself gluttonous, but he and the Sausage-Seller try to win over Demos by outdoing each other in offering him food; the way to his heart, it seems, is through his stomach. Yet Demos is savvier than one might expect: at 1125–30 he explains that he intentionally fattens up a political leader and then, whenever the leader is full (πλέως, 1129), strikes him down; the chorus repeats the idea, commending Demos for his cleverness in sacrificing and eating "whichever one is fat" (ὅς ἂν ἧ παχύς, 1139). As the competition to feed Demos draws to a close, the Sausage-Seller asks Demos to decide, "Which of us is the better man for you and your stomach?" (ὁπότερός ἐστι νῶν ἀνὴρ ἀμείνων περὶ σέ καὶ τὴν γαστέρα, 1207–8).

The stomach is also a featured part of the physical violence between Paphlagon and the Sausage-Seller, as Aristophanes twice uses the verb γαστρίζω, "punch in the stomach" (273, 454).¹⁰⁵ In the latter example, the playwright puns on the idea that sausages are made out of intestines: "Stomach-punch him with your guts and your tripe" (γάστριζε καὶ τοῖς ἐντέροις καὶ τοῖς κόλοις, 454–5). (It is worth noting that the padded stomach would soften the blow of any punches thrown onstage.) The image of the stomach-punch even becomes emblematic of this play: when in the *Clouds* parabasis the playwright boasts of his own takedown of Cleon in *Knights*, he uses the metaphor of a punch in the gut, praising himself as the playwright "who, when Cleon was at his greatest, punched him in the stomach" (ὅς μέγιστον ὄντα Κλέων' ἔπαισ' εἰς τὴν γαστέρα, 549). Aristophanes thus represents himself as having aimed right for the part of the body that represents Paphlagon-Cleon's greed.

The gaping mouth of the comic mask is the most multivalent part of the costume in *Knights*, because it symbolizes not only gluttony as the stomach does, but also an excessive and abusive verbal outpouring that is also repeatedly associated with anal penetration. Jeffrey Henderson recognized this correlation in his study of obscenity in Old Comedy: “The Sausage-Seller qua rhetor seems indistinguishable from the Sausage-Seller qua pathic.”¹⁰⁶ Nancy Worman has more fully pursued this line of analysis, arguing not only that the abusive mouth and receptive anus are correlated in *Knights* but that there is some differentiation between Paphlagon and the Sausage-Seller in this regard: Paphlagon’s “signature opening [i.e., his mouth] explosively emits things – in this case sounds – rather than taking things in.”¹⁰⁷ The Sausage-Seller, according to Worman, engages in this kind of verbal excess as well, but is more characterized by his wide-gaping πρωκτός. Worman suggests the interesting but ultimately unprovable possibility that the two characters’ costumes may have been differentiated to emphasize this point, with Paphlagon having the larger mouth of the two. Whether differentiated by character in this play or not, the ever-present mask and exaggerated, padded buttocks (which metonymically represent the anus, itself presumably not visible to the audience) reify and substantiate these themes.

One passage (lines 335–81) will exemplify the correlation between public speaking, gluttony, and anal penetration that pervades nearly every scene of *Knights*. In lines 335–50, Paphlagon disparages the Sausage-Seller’s ability to match him at speaking. Paphlagon and the Sausage-Seller then each boast of their own voracious eating and drinking (351–62). So far, the spotlight rests on the mouth. As the language turns more violent, the focus shifts to lower anatomy. The Sausage-Seller threatens, “And I’ll stuff your asshole instead of sausage” (ἐγὼ δὲ βυνήσω γέ σοι τὸν πρωκτὸν ἀντὶ φύσκης, 364), and Paphlagon counters, “And I’ll drag you outside by the buttocks, upside down” (ἐγὼ δὲ γ’ ἐξέλξω σε τῆς πυγῆς θύραζε κύβδα, 365). After more abusive language, the passage culminates in a description of Paphlagon like a pig with a peg stuck in its mouth, so that its gaping anus can be inspected (375–31).¹⁰⁸

Given the play’s relentless emphasis on bodily grotesquerie with particular attention to the gaping mouth, it is significant that the last scene of the play presents Demos with a refined appearance and almost certainly a change of mask.¹⁰⁹ Before Demos reenters, the Sausage-Seller asks the crowd to maintain respectful silence and close its mouth (εὐφημεῖν χρή καὶ στόμα κλῆιν, 1316), a reversal of the gaping that has pervaded the play. The Sausage-Seller claims to have made Demos “beautiful from ugly” (καλὸν ἐξ αἰσχροῦ, 1321), and the chorus piques curiosity about his outfit by asking, “What sort of costume is he wearing? What sort of person has he become?” (ποῖαν τιν’ ἔχει σκευήν; ποῖος γεγένηται; 1324). When he appears, Demos is now wearing a golden cicada in his hair, a symbol of archaic aristocracy, and he is “brilliant with an archaic

appearance” (ἀρχαίῳ σχήματι λάμπρος, 1331).¹¹⁰ It seems likely that Demos is also now wearing the long linen *chiton* that according to Thucydides was worn together with the golden cicada hairpin in earlier periods.¹¹¹ Furthermore, at line 1406 the Sausage-Seller, too, receives a new robe, a frog-green βατραχίς that is known from other sources to have been a full-length robe.¹¹² It is only appropriate that at the play’s suddenly happy resolution, the body of both remaining characters onstage, the grotesque comic body that has represented all that is wrong with Athens and its current crop of demagogues, is covered up.

REVEALING THE COMIC BODY: *LYSISTRATA*

The play that most extensively engages and exposes parts of the comic body is *Lysistrata*. While other comedies focus their costume antics on layers of disguise or inventive animal costumes, *Lysistrata* pays more attention to the comic body itself and to simple dynamics of dress and undress. The phallus is the part of the body most famously prominent in this play, but other parts of the *somation* are also exposed to an unusual degree. Yet *Lysistrata* plays with concealment as well, displaying the artificiality of the comic body and hinting at further revelation, but repeatedly stopping just short of full exposure. When it comes to the comic body, this play is a tease.

Perhaps the lack of elaborate disguising in *Lysistrata* explains why scholars have given relatively little scrutiny to the workings of costume in this play.¹¹³ Some have discussed the use of the comic phallus, observing that its usual functions, along with its normal flaccid state, are put aside in *Lysistrata* and the erect phallus becomes primarily a source of frustration to the male characters, as well as an object of desire for the female characters.¹¹⁴ Yet the phallus does not appear onstage until halfway through the play; at least as much of the play centers on female bodies. Two studies have considered in some detail what it means for *Lysistrata* to stage the female body. First, Lauren Taaffe has focused on the presence of real male bodies underneath the bodysuits of the female characters. In Taaffe’s analysis, “plot, character, and text all indicate that ‘woman’ is primarily a mimetic construct,” which ultimately reinforces the notion of “the inauthenticity and artificiality of femininity.”¹¹⁵ But the depiction of the male comic body as manifestly artificial in visual media may make us want to reconsider Taaffe’s emphasis on female artificiality. In a different vein, Sarah Culpepper Stroup has argued that the wives in *Lysistrata* are “hetairized,” that is, assimilated to the status of *hetairai*.¹¹⁶ In Stroup’s view, this hetairization is prompted both by the sexual bargaining on which the plot depends and by a lack of precedents for staging comic wives (but precedents did exist for comic *hetairai*). While Stroup’s primary emphasis is not on staging per se, her argument has bearing on both clothing and the revelation of the female body in this play.

For the majority of the play, the female characters in *Lysistrata* control both the body itself and the clothing that covers it – in other words, the two layers of costume that are at the heart of this play. Control over the body, essential to the very plot of *Lysistrata*, is first established by Lysistrata and her female allies early in the play in a recast version of the stock ogling-and-fondling scene. Throughout the play, other women also exert the ability to reveal or conceal the body – their own and others’ – through clothing. This physical control over garments interacts elegantly with the motif of wool working that recurs throughout the play. Thus, costume is the common thread linking the women’s traditional domestic duties, their handling of clothing onstage, and their much more radical assumption of the power to control bodies. The links between manipulation of the body, manipulation of clothing, and textile imagery are facilitated by the fact that the comic body itself is fabric. By emphasizing the interplay between the body and clothing, the play is able to interweave a quintessentially female role (provision of textiles) with a radical new one (control over the body itself). In the end, both of these forms of control reach their limits, as men reclaim their prerogatives.

The prologue of the play introduces each strand in this nexus of body and clothing, and then weaves them together. First, the clothes. As Lysistrata and Calonice await the other women’s arrival, Calonice objects (42–5) that women could not possibly do anything intelligent or glorious, since they just sit around beautified, wearing saffron robes, Cimberic shifts, and slippers. Lysistrata responds (46–8) that these very items of apparel (along with perfume and rouge) will be the means to the women’s success.¹¹⁷ The emphasis on clothing continues in lines 49–53 with the juxtaposition of this female-gendered clothing with male military equipment (spear, shield, and sword). When Myrrhine arrives, she excuses her tardiness by explaining that she had trouble finding her girdle/waistband (ζώνιον, 72) in the dark. The repeated references to items of clothing in these opening lines establish that garments will be one of the major motifs of the play.

Next, and more extensively, the spotlight of the prologue turns to the body. As the Peloponnesian women appear onstage, the Athenian women engage in a distorted version of an Aristophanic ogling and fondling scene. This interaction, displaced to the beginning of the play from its expected position at the culmination of the play, signals up front the play’s focus on the body. Lysistrata plays the straight man (pun intended), Calonice the bomolochos, and Lampito the object of their attention (79–84):

Λυ. οἶον τὸ κάλλος, γλυκυτάτη, σου φαίνεται.
ὥς δ’ εὐχροεῖς, ὥς δὲ σφριγᾷ τὸ σῶμά σου.
κἂν ταῦρον ἄγχοις.

Λα. μάλα γ’, οἶῶ, ναὶ τῷ σιῶ·
γυμνάδδομαί γα καὶ ποτὶ πυγὰν ἄλλομαι.

Κα. ὥς δὴ καλὸν τὸ χρῆμα τῶν τιτθῶν ἔχεις.

Λα. ὅπερ ἰαρεῖόν τοί μ' ὑποψάλλασσете.

Lys. What beauty you have, sweetie.

What good color you have, how your body swells!

You could even throttle a bull.

Lam. Yes, I think so, by the gods;

I exercise, at any rate, and do the butt-kicking dance.

Cal. What a beautiful rack of tits you've got!

Lam. You all are feeling me up like a sacrificial animal.

While the Athenian women in this scene should be imagined fully covered by their ankle-length *chitons* and *himatia*, the Spartan woman's body shows through her shorter Doric *peplos* with its openings along the sides.¹¹⁸ Thus the audience is offered an unusual opportunity to view the *somation* of a speaking female character, who would normally be fully covered. It is not surprising that this revealed body is Spartan, since female nudity seems to have been particularly associated with the Spartans.¹¹⁹ The parts of Lampito's body that are highlighted in this passage correlate well with standard parts of the grotesque comic *somation*: the reference to her "swelling" body in line 80 (σφριγᾶω means to swell, like a grape) has obvious reference to some kind of padding; her rump (πυγῇ) is emphasized in line 82 when she refers to dancing ποτὶ πυγάν (and probably gives a quick demonstration); and the breasts fondled by Calonice in line 83–4 are again part of the comic padding. The color of her skin (80), usually assumed to refer to her darker complexion from being outdoors, may be indicated not only on her mask but also on her *somation*. As Taaffe suggests, "the onstage play may have called attention to the very parts of Lampito's costume that were most artificial."¹²⁰

While Taaffe interprets the Lampito scene as evidence for the gendering of artificiality as female, I see the costume implications of this encounter differently. The fondling of Lampito, by means of its blatant reworking of standard ogling conventions, serves two functions: first, it shows women controlling body costumes; second, it marks Lampito as a comically grotesque character with requisite artificiality. Normally, an attractive mute is fondled by the male protagonist and his buddy; here, a female protagonist and her buddies take on the male role of gawking and palpating.¹²¹ Lampito's swollen body and tanned skin (i.e., her *somation* and mask) set her apart from the ideal woman.¹²² The contrast between this and a typical fondling scene is also highlighted by Lampito's speech. For, unlike the conventionally silent woman in such an encounter, Lampito is hardly mute: her speech itself provides the humor as she loudly, in Doric dialect, protests her treatment. Thus, unlike the typical silent attractive object of desire, Lampito has been introduced as a truly comic character, with grotesque artificiality that befits that role.

The exposure of non-Athenian women's bodies continues as two more women, a Boeotian and a Corinthian, are inspected. (For all the Panhellenic sentiments of *Lysistrata*, Athenian chauvinism nevertheless dictates that the foreigners, not the Athenian women, get manhandled.)¹²³ The three foreign women function a bit like the three comic figures on the Choregoi krater (Figure 17), each emphasizing a different aspect of the comic body.¹²⁴ Myrrhine remarks that the Boeotian woman has a lovely πεδίον, "lowland region," which, according to Calonice, has its "herb sprouts" (i.e., pubic hair) plucked out (88–9). The hem of the Boeotian's tunic must have been lifted enough to reveal the pubic hair painted on her *somation*, a practice attested on vase paintings.¹²⁵ Finally, Myrrhine calls the third Peloponnesian woman, a Corinthian, "fine, well endowed" (χαῖα, 90). Calonice takes the adjective to refer to the Corinthian's physical attributes: "Yes indeed, she's clearly well endowed, right here and back there" (χαῖα νῆ τὸν Δία / δῆλη ὅτιν οὔσα ταυταγὶ κἀντευθενί, 91–2). The deictics make it clear that Calonice gestures toward or even handles two parts of the Corinthian's *somation*, most likely her padded stomach and buttocks.¹²⁶ By the end of this sequence, no part of the comic *somation* has been left uninspected.

Now that the prologue has shown women both observing and manipulating body costumes, it remains only to link the body and clothing together. *Lysistrata* does this when she specifies that it will be not just clothing but the selective exposure of the body underneath the clothing that will be so effective at attaining peace (149–54):

εἰ γὰρ καθήμεθ' ἔνδον ἐντετριμμένοι,
κἀν τοῖς χιτωνίοισι τοῖς Ἀμοργίνοις
γυμναὶ παρίοιμεν δέλτα παρατετιλμένοι,
στύοιντο δ' ἄνδρες κἀπιθυμοῖεν σπλεκοῦν,
ἡμεῖς δὲ μὴ προσειμέθ', ἀλλ' ἀπεχοίμεθα,
σπονδὰς ποιήσαιντ' ἂν ταχέως, εὔ οἶδ' ὅτι.

For if we would sit inside, all powdered up,
and in our slips, sheer ones,
we would enter bare, trimmed in a triangle,
and our husbands would get hard-ons and want to boink,
but we would not come near them, but would stand off,
they would make peace real quick, that's for sure.

The language of lines 150–1 brilliantly progresses from clothing (τοῖς χιτωνίοισι) to transparency (τοῖς Ἀμοργίνοις), to nudity (γυμναὶ), and finally to the pubic region (δέλτα παρατετιλμένοι), which leads to a line of more direct obscenities (152).¹²⁷ The connections with the exposure of the Peloponnesian women are clear. The mention of nudity (γυμναὶ, 151) recalls Lampito's nude exercising (γυμνάδομαι, 82; both at the beginning of the line). The reference to

trimmed pubic hair (παρατετιλμένοι, 151) reminds us of the Boeotian woman with her plucked-out sprouts (παρατετιλμένη, 89; both at line end). Lampito immediately adduces a Spartan parallel, Menelaus's reaction to the exposure of Helen's breasts (155–6), which further reminds us of the fondling of Lampito's own breasts earlier in the prologue.¹²⁸ Thus with the traditionally feminine clothing mentioned at the play's outset, the prologue interweaves an ability to manipulate women's bodies, a capacity appropriated by the women from the domain of comic males and enacted onstage through the palpation of the Peloponnesian women. The patent artificiality of Lampito and her comrades helps to facilitate the connection between these two levels of costume.

The remainder of *Lysistrata* presents a series of robings and disrobings in an almost contrapuntal structure. The well-known scene in which the women interact with the Proboulos (an Athenian magistrate) shows them physically in control of both garments and bodies; furthermore, it extends the range of their control by including additional layers of accessories as well as metaphorical references to textiles. Next, both male and female halves of the chorus will counterbalance this addition of clothing with the complete removal of their clothing. More stripping occurs in the encounter between Myrrhine and her husband. Finally, the women assist in the redressing of their male counterparts, and there is one final exposure, that of the allegorical figure of Reconciliation. As we examine each of these scenes in detail, we can more fully appreciate their contributions to the interwoven themes of clothing, the body, concealment, revelation, and power.

The Proboulos scene first of all shows Lysistrata and the women in continued control of costume. When Lysistrata emerges from the gates of the Acropolis (i.e., the *skene* doors) to confront the outraged magistrate directly, he calls upon his archers to arrest her. Lysistrata maintains command over bodily contact, as she and a formidable succession of women prevent the magistrate's archers from touching the women (433–49). Then Lysistrata, continuing her imperious tone, forbids the women from despoiling the defeated archers (461), thus implying that the women have the power to do so if they wish. Instead of stripping the archers, the women wield their costume power by adding items of costume to the Proboulos himself: first they dress the Proboulos as a woman by putting a veil on his head and a weaving basket in his hand (532–8). Finally, the women confirm their superiority by adorning the Proboulos as a corpse, decked out with garland and ribbons (599–613). Dressed for his funeral at the hands of those whom he intended to capture, the Proboulos represents visually the connection between lack of costume control and death.

The exchange of gendered costume in this scene represents the inverted power relationships in the play. The women's appropriation of male prerogatives, seen already in their manhandling of Lampito, is here represented by a masculinization of their costume, as the women who assist Lysistrata are

described as being in full panoply (ἐξωπλισμένων, 454) and are called her allies (ξύμμαχοι, 456).¹²⁹ The forced cross-dressing of the Proboulos completes the picture of gender reversal: the counterpart to a militarized woman is a feminized man.

A final significance of the Proboulos scene for the costume dynamics of *Lysistrata* is that it shifts attention to women's traditional role as the providers of clothing. The refusal to strip the archers is our first hint that this scene will be focused on the provision of clothing rather than its removal. The veil and weaving basket imposed on the Proboulos facilitate Lysistrata's famous analogy of weaving and political activity (574–86).¹³⁰ As she explains how the women will handle the current political mess, Lysistrata progresses through a series of wool-working metaphors, including spinning, washing, beating, carding, and, finally, collecting together all the tufts of wool (here representing the colonies) into one thick cloak for the demos (584–6):

κᾶτ' ἀπὸ τούτων πάντων τὸ κατάγμα λαβόντας
δεῦρο ξυνάγειν καὶ συναθροίζειν εἰς ἓν, κᾶπειτα ποιῆσαι
τολύπην μεγάλην, κᾶτ' ἐκ ταύτης τῷ δήμῳ χλαῖναν ὑφῆναι.

and then, taking the tuft from all of these
bring it together and join them together into one, and then make
a great ball of wool, and then from this, weave a warm cloak for the public.

Thus while the prologue links the body with clothing and puts the women in control of both, this scene associates provision of garments with political action, a key concept that will recur in the play's costume interactions.

While the Proboulos scene focuses on adding accessories and providing clothing, the chorus members take the opposite tack, stripping away the layers of their clothing in three stages. Thus the exposure of comic body costumes that began with the Peloponnesian women in the prologue returns in the highly structured and stunningly complete disrobing of the men's and women's choruses. What starts out looking like standard choral stripping is taken to whole new levels in this play. First, the members of the men's half chorus remove their *himatia* (615), a fairly unremarkable action typical of any chorus before vigorous activity. (In this case, the old men have an additional practical reason to get rid of their cloaks, since they've been drenched in the preceding action.) Because choral stripping is always voluntary, the female semi-chorus does not control the men's costume the way the others had done with the Proboulos; but they do match the men, action for action. The women soon counter the men's stripping by removing their *himatia* as well (637). As they do, they pointedly mention their past religious service to the city, beginning with their service as *arrephoroi*, the young girls who helped weave the peplos for Athena at the Panathenaea; they also recall the time when they shed their

saffron gowns to play the bear at the Brauronia (641–7).¹³¹ Thus, both their weaving and their disrobing are affiliated with the religious contributions of women that have been shown to underlie *Lysistrata*.¹³² The reference to ritual undressing at the Brauronia also gives some religious cover to the women’s subsequent uncovering.

Soon the choral stripping proceeds to its next stage. The men are exhorted by their leader to doff their *exomides* (ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐξωμίδ’ ἐκδυώμεθ’, 662). They urge themselves to become rejuvenated (ἀνηβῆσαι, 669), to set their whole body aflutter (ἀναπτερῶσαι πᾶν τὸ σῶμα, 669–70), and finally to shake off their old age (ἀποσεισασθαι τὸ γῆρας τόδε, 670). This last image, of shedding old age as a snake sheds its skin, points at the sagging layer of “skin” that is the *somation*, perhaps indicated explicitly with a gesture to the *somation* or mask at τόδε in 670. The suggestion here that the body is a layer that can be shed is the closest we get in Aristophanes to a self-conscious reference to the possibility of another body under the *somation* and mask.¹³³ We should note again that the pointedly artificial layer is on a set of male characters, not female. The old men cannot, of course, take off their *somatia* on stage any more than they can be young again, but something almost as outrageous happens next: the members of the women’s chorus soon follow the men’s lead and remove their bottom layer of clothing. Threatening to “let loose my sow” (682–3) – with “sow” meaning either their anger or their genitalia¹³⁴ – and shear the men’s fleece (their pubic hair?), the women remove another layer of clothing, presumably a *chiton*: “But let us, too, strip quickly, women” (ἀλλὰ χῆμεῖς, ὦ γυναῖκες, θᾶπτον ἐκδυώμεθα, 686).

The orchestra is now filled with stage-naked old men and old women, a comic spectacle rivaling in its own way that of Old Comedy’s most elaborately costumed choruses. In a bold and apparently unprecedented move, Aristophanes makes the comic body itself, both male and female versions, the visual symbol of the play. Recall the two stage-naked actors on the Goose Play vases (Figures 6 and 7), and then multiply that image by about twelve to visualize the spectacle in the orchestra. The men, at least, remain stage-naked for more than one quarter of the play, until line 1020; the women are stage-naked for almost that long.¹³⁵ The distancing power of the *somation* makes this scene possible: without it, characters portraying free Athenian citizen women never would have approached the degree of public nudity that this chorus displays. In other words, this exposure is possible precisely because it is false.

But the chorus is not quite done exposing itself. At 799–800, the leader of the men’s chorus kicks and further displays the hairy genitals painted on his *somation*.¹³⁶ After several exchanges about hirsute males, the women’s leader threatens to perform her own kick, which will reveal her “man-sack” or vulva (σάκανδρον, 824); her pubic hair, she claims, will be neatly trimmed with a lamp despite her age (826–8). The mention of depilation recalls again the

exposure of the Boeotian woman's pubic region in the prologue, but this time the action probably does not occur onstage: the verbs are all future or optative, in contrast with the man's exposure, where the woman actually observes his hairy behind (800). This conclusion to the choral stripping sequence provides the play's third example of stopping short before full exposure: just as the archers were not stripped and the men's chorus hinted at but did not actually shed its "old age," now the women's leader threatens but does not follow through on exposing her hidden genitals. These gestures exemplify the exposure-yet-concealment paradox of the comic body: even when comedy claims to expose everything, there is always one more layer hidden beneath. This paradox is masterfully integrated into the action of *Lysistrata*: like the male characters, the audience is being teased with the comic body.

This abortive exposure by the women's chorus provides an effective transition into the next stripping sequence, the encounter between Myrrhine and her husband Cinesias. This scene is exhibit A of *Lysistrata*'s plan in action, as Myrrhine uses carefully controlled but ultimately incomplete exposure to frustrate her husband into submission. Early in the scene, a reference to wool working reminds us of women's domestic connection with textiles: "Aren't you worried," Cinesias asks Myrrhine in 896–7, "about your wool getting pulled apart by hens?"¹³⁷ Myrrhine proceeds through a sequence of undressing repeatedly disrupted by the fetching of stage properties. First she loosens the top of her tunic (920, 925 – both forms of ἐκδύομαι, recalling each chorus's use of the word at 662 and 686), then her breastband (931), then her shoes (950), before running off, to her husband's chagrin, in a state of only partial undress.¹³⁸ Like Cinesias, the audience is held in suspense, wondering just how much of her *somation* Myrrhine will reveal. We have seen how our playwright handles the bodies of foreigners and old Athenian women; how far will he go with a young Athenian wife? It is noteworthy that there are no overtly obscene references to Myrrhine's own body, nor are her genitalia exposed.

The grotesque element in this scene is represented not by the wife but by the husband, whom Myrrhine calls ridiculous (καταγέλαστ') at 907. The Myrrhine–Cinesias scene marks the first appearance of the erect phallus in this play, as Cinesias arrives with an obvious and painful erection at 845; the phallus is referenced repeatedly in this scene (928, 937, and 947) and will continue to be prominent for the rest of the play. Hence, although the erect phallus represents frustration, it also represents the reclaiming of the comic stage by protuberantly male bodies. The tension between concealment and exposure will continue to be emphasized as more and more male characters arrive with erections that cannot be hidden, no matter how much they fiddle around with their cloaks. The Spartan herald tries to cover his phallus with his *chlamys*, only to accidentally expose himself to Cinesias (980–9). At 1083–5, the members of the Athenian delegation are said to hold their cloaks away from their stomachs

(again in an attempt to hide the phallus); then they drop them, using deictics to point to their erect condition. The chorus soon advises them to pick their cloaks back up again, reminding them what happened to the herms (1093–4). The Spartan delegation agrees to put its clothing back on as well (1095–6). In this slapstick sequence involving both an item of clothing and a manifestly artificial part of the body costume, the two delegations enact parallel patterns of concealment, then exposure, then recovering.

As *Lysistrata* draws to a close, the reconciliation of warring parties and return to normalcy are enacted onstage through two developments in costume interactions. The first is the re-covering of male bodies. This begins when the leader of the women's chorus dresses the men's leader in his *exomis* again (1019–21), remarking that he looks ridiculous (καταγέλαστος, 1020 and 1024; cf. Myrrhine to Cinesias in 907) in his nude state. Thus, the women's chorus enacts onstage the provision of clothing that Lysistrata had cast in political terms at 574–86. As I have already observed, the delegations' costume byplay culminates in their own re-covering of their phalluses (1093–6). Finally, the settlement that Lysistrata engineers between the Spartan and Athenian delegations is also based on the metaphorical provision of clothing. She first describes an instance when a Spartan came dressed in the *phoinikis*, the red cloak worn by Spartan soldiers, to ask aid of the Athenians; then, at greater length, she recalls a time when the Athenians, whom she characterizes as “wearing slaves' tunics” (κατωνάκας φοροῦντας, 1151) were assisted by the Spartans, who “in place of the slave tunic surrounded your demos with a warm cloak again” (κάντι τῆς κατωνάκης τὸν δῆμον ὑμῶν χλαῖναν ἡμπέσχον πάλιν, 1155–6).¹³⁹ With her clear echo of the words she herself spoke at line 586 (τῷ δῆμῳ χλαῖναν ὑφῆναι, the only other occurrence of *chlaina* in the play), Lysistrata casts the political rapprochement in the same terms as the gender reconciliation we have seen enacted by the chorus. This time, however, the provision of clothing she describes is both by males and for males; women's active role, even in matters of clothing, is gradually being ceded to men.

The second symbol of reconciliation is, of course, Reconciliation – the mute woman whose nude body is displayed by Lysistrata and is partitioned and claimed by the male delegations.¹⁴⁰ Thus as men are being literally and metaphorically re-covered, they also recover control of an exposed woman's body. The play ends with a restoration of the comic conventions that had been presented in distorted form at the beginning of the play: a female character is ogled and fondled again, but now at the “right” time in the play, by the “right” people, with the “right” silent complicity.¹⁴¹ One last time, though, Lysistrata plays the controlling role, telling Reconciliation to take hold of the men by hand or by phallus (1115–21), an act that combines compulsion with the phallic gratification normally associated with a protagonist's success.¹⁴² Note that unlike other scenes where male characters ogle attractive women, the attention

focuses not on a variety of body parts (skin, breasts, kisses, etc.) but entirely on territory available for penetration: πρωκτός (anus) in 1148; κύσθον (cunt) in 1158; τῶγκυκλον (rounded part) in 1162 (see later comment); the “hedgehog,” “Malian gulf,” and legs in 1168–70. These are precisely the parts of the body costume that we did not see in the Myrrhine scene, and Stroup is entirely justified in speaking of the “pornified pimping” of Reconciliation.¹⁴³

Since we cannot know with certainty whether Reconciliation was played by a real woman or a man in a bodysuit, the costuming in this scene admits two possible interpretations. If a woman played Reconciliation, as Wilamowitz and others believed, she would embody real exposure at last, after all the false bodies and tantalizingly partial revelations that the play has presented.¹⁴⁴ Like the nude acrobats on the Paestan vases (Figures 15 and 16), Reconciliation’s real body would stand in contrast to the multilayered and grotesquely artificial costumes of the characters around her. Indeed, if real women were the conventional actors in such scenes, the appearance of Reconciliation would represent a restoration of comic convention in this aspect as well, in contrast with the fake women’s bodies inspected in the prologue.¹⁴⁵

But if, on the other hand, as most modern commentators believe, Reconciliation is yet another artificial body whose exposure is only *somation*-deep, then the exposure-concealment paradox persists to the end of the play.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, the text hints that the artificiality persists, even with Reconciliation. The semantic overlap between body and clothing recurs at 1162, where the word τῶγκυκλον, a common word for a woman’s overwrap (literally, “in a circle” or “encircling”), refers with double entendre to some rounded area on Reconciliation’s body.¹⁴⁷ Immediately after the Reconciliation scene, the chorus offers the audience luxurious textiles available in its house (1189). But this, too, turns out to be a tease: “But when you look, you will see nothing, unless one of you has sharper eyes than I” (1200–2).¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, the difference between a real female Reconciliation and an artificial one becomes a choice between final consummation and continued frustration. Although the scene could be played either way, the words of the chorus suggest that the rewards of Reconciliation remain, in the end, only in the mind’s eye.

Taking *Lysistrata* in isolation from other plays of Aristophanes, we might be tempted to think that the provision of and mastery over artificial trappings is something naturally associated with women in Aristophanic comedy, since the women in *Lysistrata* do it so well for much of the play. We will certainly see the provision of clothing by women return as a motif in *Assemblywomen*, where its economic implications are more fully developed. It is also clear from our analysis of *Lysistrata* that Aristophanes has associated the manipulation of garments with women’s traditional roles in the production of textiles. Yet the women’s control over body costumes in *Lysistrata* has its limits: no woman ever strips a man in this play, and at the end of the play it is the men who reclaim a

woman's body as their own territory. Like the other types of power the women exert in *Lysistrata*, their control over costume is only a temporary, anomalous capacity that disappears once the status quo has been restored. Indeed, it is my contention that the women in *Lysistrata* control costume (including their own bodies) not *because* they are women but *in spite of* the fact that they are women. We will better understand this when we turn to other plays in which control of costume is what a successful male protagonist does best. But first, we need to take a closer look at the next level of comic costume after the body itself – namely, basic items of Athenian attire – and examine some plays in which that layer is exploited.

THREE

CLOAKS, SHOES, AND SOCIETAL REDRESS

Wasps, *Assemblywomen*, and *Wealth* showcase the second layer of comic costume, namely the characters' clothes. These plays, eschewing the more fantastic elements of Old Comedy, focus on Athenian public institutions (the lawcourts and the assembly) and basic demographic distinctions (age, sex, and class) within the *polis*. Accordingly, the apparel of normal Athenian life – tunic, cloak, and shoes – takes a primary position in the costuming of each of these plays. Yet although these clothes may be ordinary, they serve as key examples of the economical ways in which Aristophanes uses costume in performance to enhance each play's thematic impact. I argue, for example, for a connection between clothes, shoes, and participation in the very institutions of democracy in *Wasps* and *Assemblywomen*. Furthermore, the reversal of socio-economic conditions that forms an important part of each play's plot finds its concrete expression in exchanges of costume. *Wasps*, focusing on the attempted alteration of one individual's place in society, stages a costume change focused entirely on that character. *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth* stage *polis*-wide reversals of status, and accordingly their costume exchanges are more widely distributed throughout the action. To appreciate fully the high degree of manipulability of these costumes, we first need to examine the typical Athenian clothing whose features are so readily exploited on the comic stage.

THE ESSENTIAL WARDROBE OF A COMIC CHARACTER

Athenian attire, and consequently the clothing worn on top of their *somatia* by comic actors portraying average Athenians, consists of two layers, an inner garment and an outer layer. The standard inner garment is the *chiton*, a piece of cloth that is folded vertically and attached at the shoulders to form a simple tunic.¹ The *chiton* is often belted and sometimes also sewn together at the side. Like the bodysuit that we examined in the [previous chapter](#), the *chiton* is so much a foundational part of the comic costume that it is relatively rarely referenced in our comic texts. The archaeological record, however, makes it clear that the *chiton* was a common element of comic costuming: the *chiton* is sported by comic actors on vases and especially terracotta figurines, where it is ubiquitous.² A standard *chiton* is worn by the older male figure on the left of the Charis krater ([Figure 9](#)), whose name Philotimides suggests a respectable citizen. While the normal fifth-century Athenian male *chiton* reached to mid thigh, those on comic characters are depicted as even shorter, exposing the comic genitalia. In depictions of comic performances, an extremely common variant of the male *chiton* is the *exomis*, a short, belted tunic that crosses over only one shoulder. A large proportion of the male characters on comic vases wear the *exomis*. For example, this garment is worn by the slave character Xanthias at right on the Charis krater ([Figure 9](#)), the central figure (Pyrrhias) on the Choregoi krater ([Figure 17](#)), and both male characters on the St. Petersburg Obeliaphoroi krater ([Figure 14](#)). Since the *exomis* allows for greater ease of movement, it is commonly worn by slaves, working men, and other physically active people, but is not limited to them. The unhindered movement it allows, along with its use by lower-status individuals, probably explains the prevalence of the *exomis* among comic characters.³ The female *chiton*, in contrast, is typically ankle length (in comic contexts as elsewhere) but is often less visible than the male's, because the woman's outer garment is also longer and more closely wrapped, covering much of the *chiton*. The ankle-length female *chiton* can be seen worn by the seated woman on the Reckoning krater ([Figure 1](#)), the central figure on the Charis krater ([Figure 9](#)), and the woman approached in the Dirty Old Man krater ([Figure 10](#)). A particularly feminine inner garment is the *kekrotos*, a saffron-dyed tunic that is worn only by women, effeminate, and Dionysus.⁴

In contrast with the ubiquitous but rarely mentioned *chiton* or *exomis*, the *himation*, a standard Athenian outer garment, is the most frequently mentioned item of costume in comic texts.⁵ This greater incidence occurs not because the *himation* is more commonly worn onstage than the tunic – the archaeological evidence suggests otherwise – but because it is more frequently manipulated onstage and therefore leaves its mark in the text. Because of its nature, the garment lends itself to such handling. While I follow the standard translation

of *himation* as “cloak,” this piece of costume is even less structured and more flexible than the English word suggests. The *himation* is simply a rectangular piece of cloth, which could even do double duty as a blanket (*Ass.* 333–4, 535–8). Like the comic *chiton* and *exomis*, the male *himation* depicted in comic vase paintings and figurines tends to be a bit smaller than the standard Athenian male one, allowing the comic body to protrude and also minimizing difficulties with what could otherwise be a rather awkward garment to handle.⁶

One function of this outer layer is to indicate a character’s social position vis-à-vis others who either are foreigners or belong to a different class within Athens. On the one hand, the *himation* as “the costume par excellence of the Athenian citizen in the fifth century” can mark a character as an Athenian citizen in contrast with other noncitizen or non-Athenian characters.⁷ Of the forty-eight explicit references to *himatia* in Aristophanes, not one indicates a male slave character wearing the garment; only one (*Thesm.* 1181) refers to a female slave.⁸ The foreignness of the Triballian in *Birds* (1567–8) is manifest by his unfamiliarity with the finer points of wearing the Athenian *himation*. In the opening scenes of *Acharnians*, the exotic outfits of the foreign delegations at the assembly stand in contrast with the normal Athenian attire of Dicaeopolis and the chorus.⁹ On the other hand, internal oppositions within the Athenian citizenry can also be marked by contrasts between the types of cloaks worn by characters. There is a thick, expensive, winter variation (*chlaina*); a lighter, finer, special-occasion weave (*chlani*); and, very commonly in comedy, a coarser, everyday version (*tribon* or diminutive *tribonion*). There is also a female type, also called *himation* but somehow visually distinct from the male, most likely in its greater size but also perhaps in fabric; it can be viewed draped over the head of Charis (Figure 9) or the woman propositioned in Figure 10.¹⁰ As Hughes observes, in both the theater and in vase painting, the quality of fabric itself cannot be easily conveyed, so vase painters use decoration like patterns, borders, or fringes to differentiate the expensiveness of cloaks.¹¹ The three plays we examine in this chapter make heavy use of these variants in *himatia* to define the social status of the characters who wear them and to create comic incongruity when the outfit clashes with the status of its wearer. Conversely, Aristophanes’ *Peace*, with its insistence on a collective, Panhellenic effort to regain peace, studiously avoids making distinctions among its characters’ clothing. In fact, the most notable aspect of costume in *Peace* is the play’s almost complete silence about what its characters are wearing.¹² The only significant clothing mentioned is the *phoinikis*, a crimson military cloak, which is mentioned twice (303, 1173) only to stress that it has no place in this play.

The *himation*’s ability to indicate social status should not be considered its sole contribution to comic staging. Two other features, its versatility and removability, are key factors facilitating its rich deployment on the comic stage. Both artistic and textual evidence attest to the great variety of ways the

comic *himation* can be folded or draped. This versatility of the *himation* is not limited to comic contexts, of course, but can be seen throughout fifth- and fourth-century art.¹³ There is the restrained and socially approved method of wrapping it around the right side and over the left shoulder to encompass the left arm, the so-called ἐπιδέξια manner that Poseidon urges the Triballian to adopt in *Birds*. Cheiron manages to maintain this wrapping even when being pushed up the stairs on the vase named after him (Figure 12).¹⁴ But such decorum is often abandoned in comedy. From comic vase paintings, Hughes observes that “since the wearer was obliged to hold his *himation* in place, inappropriate activity disarranged it. Thus, when an old thief runs, his cloak opens, spilling his booty; when a man crouches to gawk sharply upwards, it falls off his shoulder.”¹⁵ Compare the Dirty Old Man (Figure 10), whose *himation* billows behind him, exposing most of his body. Terracotta figurines and vase paintings show comic actors with their *himatia* in a variety of positions: draped loosely over both shoulders, slung over the left shoulder, draped around the waist, pulled over the head (a practice common for females but sometimes also employed by males), held in front of the face, held to the side, or absent completely.¹⁶ Indeed, the variety of positions of the *himation* attested in theatrical artifacts suggests that actors relied on it heavily to convey character or behavior.¹⁷ Both artifacts and texts indicate creative uses of the *himation*. The old man in an early fourth-century Attic comic terracotta (Figure 2) uses his *himation* to wipe his eye. Another figure from the same group of terracottas represents a nurse with a baby tucked inside her *himation* (Figure 20).¹⁸ A third figurine is a woman hiding her face in her *himation* (Figure 21).¹⁹ An Apulian bell-krater from the middle of the fourth century shows one character handing a *himation* to another character who gesticulates with both hands.²⁰ As we have seen, at *Lysistrata* 1083–4 the members of the Athenian delegation hold their *himatia* stretched before them in a vain attempt to hide their phalluses. Strepsiades wraps his more tightly around him in anticipation of rain (*Clouds* 267). At *Wealth* 707–15, Cario says that he covered himself with his *tribonion* at Asclepius’s temple, but peeked through its holes; no doubt he reenacts this gesture as he narrates. Chorus members, too, could manipulate their cloaks for visual effect, as we will see in Chapter 5.

Perhaps most importantly, because the *himation* is not tailored or even attached to anything, it is also very easily removed.²¹ Very few Aristophanic cloaks stay put throughout an entire play: they are removed before vigorous activity; they are tossed aside in exchange for other clothes; they are stripped from humiliated characters. In real-life Athens, *himatia* were even frequently stolen. Many of the costume antics that I survey in Chapter 1 are conducted using the *himation*. Indeed, this book on costume-related actions in Old Comedy would be far shorter were it not for that easily manipulated piece of costume that comedy brilliantly appropriates from Athenian everyday life.



20. Comic nurse holds a baby. Attic terracotta, c. 400. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.225.26).

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The Romans' name for their Greek-inspired comedies, *fabulae palliatae* ("plays in the *pallium*," the Latin word for *himation*), indicates just how essential the *himation* was to comic performances.

Aristophanes' *Clouds* can illustrate in a fairly simple way several of these uses of standard Athenian attire. Early in the play, clothing represents dichotomized categories of class. Strepsiades' own threadbare cloak, to which he points directly at line 54, symbolizes the poverty to which he has been reduced by his profligate wife and son. Strepsiades tells the audience that his aristocratic wife dreams of seeing her son driving a chariot and wearing a *ξυστίς* (a long, ornate robe worn by charioteers), while Strepsiades himself, a self-admitted country bumpkin, envisions his son herding goats and wearing a leather *διφθέρα*, a rustic jerkin (69–72).²² In the play's agon, the wearing of *himatia* represents a different dichotomy, this time old versus new, but the generational contrast is strongly colored by the leering prurience of the speaker, Stronger Argument. He contrasts the good old days when boys walked to their music lessons



21. Comic woman covers her face. Attic terracotta, c. 400. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.225.23).

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“naked,” that is, without cloaks (γυμνούς, 965), with the way Weaker Argument teaches the boys to wrap up in cloaks from the start (σὺ δὲ τοὺς νῦν εὐθὺς ἐν ἱματίοισι διδάσκεις ἐντετυλίχθαι, 987). The lines that immediately follow make it clear that Stronger Argument is not so much concerned with some sartorial principle as he is disappointed at being prevented from ogling boys’ bodies. The sexual overtones continue when Stronger Logos admits defeat and abandons his own *himation* to desert to the other side – namely, the side of the wide-assed majority (1102–4). A third use to which cloaks are put in *Clouds* is through a stolen-cloak routine. Early on, we hear that Socrates has stolen a cloak from the palaestra (179). Then, in a pseudo-ritualistic moment, Socrates tells Strepsiades to put aside his *himation* to enter the Thinkery (497–500). Later it becomes clear that the ritualistic undressing was just a pretense for Socrates to steal Strepsiades’ cloak and shoes (856–9); as he sets fire to the Thinkery, Strepsiades refers to himself as “that man whose cloak you took” (ἐκεῖνος οὗπερ θοιμάτιον εἰλήφατε, 1498). Thus, even a play like *Clouds* that is

not principally concerned with matters of costume can rely on the versatile *himation* to mark out oppositions between characters and to create memorable moments in its stage action.

Shoes are another fundamental element of costuming mentioned frequently in Aristophanic comedy. Unfortunately, the visual evidence and the textual evidence for shoes on the comic stage do not align well. The first problem is that while shoes are mentioned fairly frequently in Aristophanes, they do not appear often on comic terracotta figurines or comic vase paintings. The comic characters depicted on southern Italian comic vases are almost invariably barefoot, even in outdoor scenes. According to the calculations of Hughes, a striking 92 percent of comic characters in extant visual media before 375 are depicted barefoot; the proportion decreases to 49 percent after the middle of the fourth century.²³ Even the one vase painting that can be securely identified with a particular scene from an extant play, the Würzburg Telephus krater (Figure 13), presents this problem. The vase depicts both the Relative/Telephus figure and the woman holding the bowl as barefoot, although the text of *Women at the Thesmophoria* (lines 262–3) makes it clear that the Relative has put on Agathon's shoes.²⁴ The second problem is that even when shoes are present in visual media, it is difficult to identify them with particular shoes named in comic texts. Terracotta figurines are often not sufficiently detailed to render a precise type of footwear. When shoes can be discerned on comic terracotta figurines or comic vases, they are either a small slipper or a sandal.²⁵ There is no visual representation in either medium of a comic character wearing a shoe that clearly fits the description of *embades*, the leather footwear that is most commonly mentioned in Aristophanes.²⁶ One can only speculate about the reason that comic characters in art usually go without shoes, even in outdoor scenes. Perhaps artists simply do not view footwear as a significant part of the comic costume, or perhaps artists were influenced by barefooted iconography in other types of vase painting.²⁷ On the other hand, the absence of shoes may reflect common stage practice. Hughes suggests that shoes would be too noisy for performance on a wooden stage.²⁸ Another possibility is that a tradition of barefoot comic acting in Sicily and Italy prevailed, influencing performances of comedy in Italy but not necessarily in Athens.²⁹

Despite their relative absence in comic art, shoes are important in several surviving comedies. The most common type of footwear mentioned in comedy is the *embas* (pl. *embades*), a kind of boot. Arthur Bryant, in his study of the literary evidence for Greek footwear, calls it a half boot.³⁰ Scholars of the iconography of footwear, such as Katherine Morrow and H. R. Goette, identify the *embas* with a knee-high or midcalf boot originally adopted from the Thracians and worn by riders, hunters, and northern gods.³¹ The evidence from comic texts concurs that the *embas* is a substantial leather shoe or boot: *Knights* 868–70 attests that its material is leather, and *Assemblywomen* 483 and *Wealth*

758–9 show that it is hefty enough to make some noise. Furthermore, the *embas* is worn by men and, as I will later stress, intended for the outdoors.³² Thus arises the amusing incongruity when *embades* are worn by the female chorus of *Assemblywomen* as part of their male disguise. Another type of men's boot, the *Lakonikai*, also appears frequently in comedy, sometimes contrasted with *embades* (as in *Wasps*), and other times used in a generic sense synonymously with *embades* (as in *Assemblywomen*).³³

For comic staging, a particularly salient feature of both *embades* and *Lakonikai* is that they are worn outside and removed upon entering the house. Interpreters of Aristophanes often refer to the *embas* as “a poor man's shoe,” but this designation overstates the poverty of the wearer and often misses the point.³⁴ Admittedly, three passages in Aristophanes do seem to present the *embas* as the footwear of the common man, paired with a workaday *tribon* and jettisoned in favor of fancier shoes in times of good fortune.³⁵ Yet to focus solely on this contrast with more upscale shoes is to miss much of the significance of the *embades*. Because this is footwear for the outdoors, manipulation of *embades* on the comic stage can serve as an indicator of transitions or transgressions between the household and the outside world, much as the way donning one's coat and hat once signified the modern Western white-collar male's departure for work. In the case of both *Wasps* and *Assemblywomen*, cloaks and shoes work in this way to delineate the border between *oikos* and *polis*.

Furthermore, the heavy emphasis on *embades* in *Wasps* and *Assemblywomen* suggests a correlation between these shoes and the very institutions of democracy.³⁶ This is the footwear not simply for exiting the house, but for going outside to participate in public life, to attend the assembly or the courts. As the women's ringleader in *Assemblywomen* instructs the wives to don their disguises, she makes explicit the connection between boots and assembly attendance (269–71): “Put on the Laonians as quickly as possible, just as you've seen your husband do, whenever he intends to go to the assembly or outside.”³⁷ Wearing the *embades* (or *Lakonikai*) indicates that one is a man of the *demos* not only economically but also politically. It is noteworthy that the phrase οὐμβάδ' ἔχων (“the one who wears the *embas*,” i.e., the common man) at *Assemblywomen* 633 comes in a context filled with references to the public sphere (ἐπὶ τοῖσιν δημοσίοισιν, “in the public places,” 627; δημοτική ... γνώμη, “a democratic idea,” 631).³⁸ I argue that in both *Wasps* and *Assemblywomen*, the removal of shoes symbolizes a coerced retreat from political participation and a confinement to the private household.

This connection of the *embades* (often paired with a cloak) with citizen participation in Athenian public life, rather than with the lower-to-middle class in particular, jibes better with the appearance of *embades* in two types of noncomic Athenian monuments. Some of the riders on the Parthenon frieze wear *embades* as part of their Thracian-inspired attire,³⁹ but these idealized

cavalrymen can hardly be meant to be understood as wearing “poor man’s shoes.” Furthermore, fourth-century funeral reliefs often depict the deceased in *embades* and *himation*.⁴⁰ In each of those contexts, the notion of civic engagement is a more plausible signification of the *embades* than is lower-to-middle-class status. The association of *embades* with participation in Athenian public life may offer one additional explanation for the absence of such boots on most southern Italian depictions of comic actors. It is possible that the distinctively Athenian *oikos-polis* dichotomy embodied in *embas*-manipulation did not make the transition to the southern Italian stage. Unlike the cloak, whose many forms of manipulation make it indispensable to comedy, the *embas*, with its one main function, seems to have stayed in Athens.

In Attic comedy, then, both the *himation* and the *embades* are loaded with dramaturgical potential and primed for onstage manipulation. The contributions of these items of apparel are particularly apparent in the plays we examine in this chapter. In *Wasps*, power struggles, both generational and political, between father and son are enacted through tussles over costume. *Assemblywomen* further exploits the thematic possibilities in everyday *himatia*: the women’s theft of their husbands’ cloaks is incorporated into their social program and links the play’s cross-dressing with economic redress. In *Wealth*, reversals of socio-economic status are demonstrated by changes in costume, while a subtext of references to tragedy underlies some of the costume effects.

YOU CAN DRESS HIM UP BUT . . . : *WASPS*

Wasps is best known as a portrayal of one man’s obsession with the Athenian jury system, and accordingly the use of costume in the play reflects an almost unwavering focus on the protagonist. The costumes worn by Philocleon fall into three very distinct stages: first, a *tribon/embades* ensemble, which symbolizes his jury service and which Philocleon is convinced to discard; second, a *chlaina/Lakonikai* getup, which replaces his first outfit and which he inhabits reluctantly and uncomfortably; and, finally, the comic body itself, boisterously displayed in a closing scene that casts aside all the preceding connotations of costume in order to emphasize the parts of the costume that mark Philocleon above all as a comic protagonist. Thus, the costume dynamics of *Wasps* are somewhat episodic, in contrast with the more integrated and thematically sophisticated use of costume that we see in other plays. The spotlight remains fixed on the protagonist’s outfit and the symbolism of its removal, with none of the smaller costume shenanigans that tend to embroil minor characters in other plays.

This singular focus on one character’s costume nevertheless unites several important themes that have been treated by scholarship on *Wasps*. Some scholars, such as David Konstan, Douglas MacDowell, Kenneth Rothwell, and

S. D. Olson, have focused on the relationship between political life, the private household, and socioeconomic class in *Wasps*.⁴¹ Costume, I argue, plays a central role here not only by designating social class but also by marking the boundaries between public and private spheres. Other scholars, most notably A. M. Bowie, have seen *Wasps* in a ritual context, as a kind of reverse coming-of-age story, pitting son against father and turning on its head the normal transition of a young man (an ephebe) into adulthood.⁴² Our examination of costume change in this play will give us an opportunity to evaluate comedy's appropriation of ritual motifs of dressing and divestment. Finally, in a more general sense, *Wasps* explores the incorrigibility of human character, self-consciously citing Odyssean precedents for mutability only to twist them in the end.⁴³ Philocleon's costume changes raise (and answer) the question of whether or to what extent a person can change.

All of these themes – the conflict between generations, the interaction between public and private, the relationship between social class and political outlook, the question of mutability or incorrigibility – are expressed in a power struggle over costume in the play's pivotal dressing scene (1122–73). The ability of costume in the dressing scene to express the play's converged themes is the result of carefully laid groundwork in the earlier parts of the play.

The first meaning assigned to Philocleon's costume is political. The prologue of *Wasps* invests two items of Philocleon's apparel, his *embades* and his *tribonion*, with civic significance.⁴⁴ First, a slave recounts a dream in which sheep are holding the assembly on the Pnyx, sporting walking sticks and *tribonia* (31–3, ἔδοξέ μοι ... ἐν τῇ Πυκνὶ / ἐκκλησιάζειν πρόβατα συγκαθήμενα, / βακτηρίας ἔχοντα καὶ τριβώνια). This passage instantly establishes that political activity (ἐκκλησιάζειν, “conduct the assembly”), and not poverty per se, is the primary connotation of the *tribonion* in this play. Next, the play indicates that donning the *embades* and *tribonion* is an essential precursor to Philocleon's own jury service. We learn that part of Philocleon's jury-service ritual is to call for his *embades* right after dinner so that he can go sleep out at the courts: “Right after dinner, he shouts for his boots / and then he goes there [to the lawcourt] and sleeps in front of it, very early” (103–4, εὐθύς δ' ἀπὸ δορπηστοῦ κέκραγεν ἐμβάδας, / κᾶπειτ' ἐκεῖσ' ἔλθων προκαθεύδει πρὶ πάνυ). The *tribonion*, too, is associated with Philocleon's departure from the household: the slave recounts how the son tried to persuade Philocleon “not to wear his *tribonion* and not to go outdoors” (116–17, μὴ φορεῖν τριβώνιον / μηδ' ἐξιέναι θύραζ). The emphasis on exit in these passages is appropriate because much of the humor in the first few hundred lines of *Wasps* centers on the attempts of the slaves to keep the irrepressible Philocleon trapped inside.

Upon the arrival of the chorus, the play continues to reinforce these two interrelated ideas: the necessity of *embades* for Philocleon's departure from the house, and the connection between this footwear and civic activity.⁴⁵ When

his fellow jurors come looking for Philocleon and he does not appear, they wonder, “He hasn’t lost his *embades*, has he?” (μῶν ἀπολώλεκε τὰς ἐμβάδας, 274–5). The chorus members also indicate that they wear *embadia* (the diminutive of *embades*) when engaged in the public sphere. As they expound on the power of jurors within the Athenian political structure, the chorus members recount the obsequious treatment they receive from public figures, including Theorus, who they say polishes their boots (τὰμβάδι’ ἡμῶν περικωνεῖ, 600).⁴⁶ Another passage suggests that *embades* may be synonymous with the very identity of Philocleon. The chorus reproaches the slaves for disrespecting their master (446–7): ἀλλὰ τούτοις γ’ οὐκ ἔνι / οὐδ’ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν αἰδῶς τῶν παλαιῶν ἐμβάδων (“But these guys, at any rate, have no respect, not even in their eyes, for their old ... boots”). The word *embadon* is a surprise substitution for something else, and commentators have suggested that the most likely candidate is δεσποτῶν (“masters”).⁴⁷ If so, then Philocleon is literally identified with his shoes.

In contrast to the demotic clothing of Philocleon, his son’s outfit is alleged to have antidemocratic connotations. The chorus in high dudgeon calls the son Bdelycleon “a demos-hater and lover of monarchy who associates with Brasidas and wears tassels of wool and lets his beard grow untrimmed” (475–7). This further establishes the connection between clothing, class, and political outlook – a connection that will be further developed in the dressing scene.

Costume is one of two physical elements of the staging that symbolize the boundary between *oikos* and *polis*. The dichotomy between *oikos* and *polis* is also represented spatially by the stage façade itself and is expressed initially by the imprisonment of Philocleon inside his house in the opening scenes. This spatial dichotomy is collapsed in the private trial that Bdelycleon arranges for his father to adjudicate.⁴⁸ As Bdelycleon sets the stage for the trial of the dog Labes, there is special emphasis paid to the *thurai*, the doors on the stage façade that also represents the household of Philocleon and Bdelycleon. The chorus refers to “the matter that this man is devising before the doors” (ἐμπροσθεν ... τῶν θυρῶν, 871); Bdelycleon calls on Apollo in the god’s capacity as attendant at the doorway (τοῦ μοῦ προθύρου προπύλαιε, 875); finally, he suggests that any juror who is at the door should come inside (εἴ τις θύρασιν ἡλιαστής, εἰσίτω, 891) to participate. The stage space in front of their house is thus somehow regarded as inside; yet, at the end of the trial scene, Bdelycleon urges his father to go inside (εἰσίωμεν, 1008), as they enter the stage façade itself to clear the stage for the parabasis. Such finessing of the dichotomy between outside and inside, permissible by the conventions of comic staging, facilitates the transfer of Philocleon’s public jury service to a domestic context and is an important development from the early scenes of the play, which focused on the confinement of Philocleon.

While the spatial *oikos-polis* polarity is collapsed in the domestic trial scene, the visual symbolism of Philocleon's costume proves to be more problematic to resolve. The political and, in particular, the Athenian connotations of his old costume continue to be emphasized in the dressing scene, when Bdelycleon readies his father for a visit to an aristocratic symposium (1122–73). The redressing of Philocleon proceeds through two distinct phases, each with a strong contrast between the previously established Athenian-ness of his old clothes and the foreign overtones of his new attire.⁴⁹ First, Philocleon is divested of the *tribon* that emblemized his Athenian jury service and that his son has long been trying to get him to abandon (cf. 116). He resists this bitterly, claiming that he will never be stripped of it (1122–4). The new *chlaina* (later called a *kaunake*) that he receives is distinctly non-Athenian, so much so that he does not recognize what it is. His ignorance sets up a sequence of dialogue filled with Eastern proper names designed to hammer home the foreign origin of the costume. Bdelycleon explains that some call it a Persian cloak (Περσίδ', 1137); Philocleon may not recognize this because he has never been to Sardis (Σάρδεις, 1139); it is woven in Ecbatana (Ἐκβατάνοισι, 1143 and 1144); it has been woven by non-Greeks (τοῖσι βαρβάροις ὑφαίνεται, 1145–6).

Next those boots that Philocleon had habitually donned as he set out for the courts are exchanged for footwear with Spartan connotations, namely plusher Laconian boots (1157–8). Again the dialogue emphasizes the non-Athenian origin of the shoes. Philocleon resists three times, each time citing the foreign status of the shoes. “How could I ever endure to put on the hateful soles of enemy men?” he cries (ἐγὼ γὰρ ἂν τλαίην ὑποδήσασθαι ποτε / ἐχθρῶν παρ' ἀνδρῶν δυσμενῇ καττύματα, 1159–60). Later he resists putting his foot “into enemy territory” (εἰς τὴν πολεμίαν, 1163) and suggests that one of his toes is very anti-Spartan (πάνυ μισολάκων, 1165). Just as the chorus had feared at 274–5, Philocleon now has lost the *embades* that had emblemized his participation in public life.

This emphasis on the non-Athenian nature of Philocleon's new apparel presents a challenge to an otherwise compelling argument by S. D. Olson about the political meaning of *Wasps*.⁵⁰ Olson has argued that Bdelycleon, and through him the poet, offers a critique of the current democratic leadership's exploitation of people like Philocleon, who are deluded into thinking they have power when in fact they are deprived of the benefits of empire. In this view, Bdelycleon has his father's best interests at heart, and through him the poet offers a positive if somewhat paternalistic vision of the way Athenian democracy might better work for the *demos*. According to Olson, “the real point of the symposium scenes is to allow Philocleon to enjoy all the goods of the Empire.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, says Olson, Bdelycleon's attempt at reform fails because Philocleon, like the Athenians who have ignored their comic poet's advice, turns out to be self-defeating, dangerous, and out of control.⁵²

But if Olson's interpretation is correct, then why, just when Bdelycleon seems to have successfully converted his father (and the chorus) to this more beneficial form of democracy, does the playwright emphasize not just the luxuriousness but also the foreignness of the new costume he offers? Certainly he could have scripted a change to more elegant costume without emphasizing its Persian and Spartan connotations. Instead, the dressing scene goes out of its way to suggest that what is at stake is not just social class, but political identity. For Philocleon to jettison his *tribon* and *embades* means abandonment of who he is as a citizen participant in Athenian democracy. No wonder the playwright makes him so reluctant. The ensuing scenes, in which Philocleon utterly fails to inhabit properly this Persian-Spartan-aristocratic new outfit and role, demonstrate what a mistake it was for him to be suited up like this. To the extent that Bdelycleon has pressed for Philocleon (and the Athens that Philocleon represents) to shed the vestments of democracy, he is shown to be wrong – not just because Philocleon-Athens is incorrigible, but because Bdelycleon pushes things too far when he tries to turn Philocleon into something that he is not. As often, Aristophanes presents both the potential benefits and the potential pitfalls of any new program. The dressing scene, I suggest, is the point in the play at which the line is crossed from beneficial reform to an untenably drastic attempt at altering civic culture.

Another major theme, inversion of the father-son relationship, is also implicated in Philocleon's costume change. Anyone who has tried to dress a toddler will recognize the childish recalcitrance with which the father, Philocleon, resists his costume change. As Bdelycleon dresses his father, the son utters exasperated commands repeated by parents through the ages: "Take this, put it on, and stop talking" (1135); "Stand still" (1150); "Here, let *me* put it on you" (1154); "Hurry up" (1158, 1162, 1168); "Come on, now the other foot" (1164); "You have no other choice" (1166). These are the words of a parent struggling to clothe a willful child.

To an Athenian audience, there also would also be an adolescent resonance to the old man's divestment, because a ritual change of clothing appears to have been part of a young man's initiation into adulthood. As Angus Bowie has argued in detail, Philocleon throughout the course of *Wasps* proceeds in reverse order through the stages of a young man's transition to adulthood, his *ephebeia*.⁵³ Bowie outlines a whole set of ephebic patterns in *Wasps*, but the one that pertains directly to our discussion is the ritual change of clothes that was common in rites of passage throughout Greece.⁵⁴ In Athens, ephebes passing into adulthood would take off black robes and exchange them for white ones.⁵⁵

Bowie's suggestion that the dressing scene in *Wasps* echoes such ritual exchanges of clothing prompts us to consider briefly how Aristophanes treats the initiatory associations of costume change elsewhere as well. Two other

plays, in addition to *Wasps*, present undressing or costume exchanges with initiatory overtones. *Clouds*, first produced in the year immediately before *Wasps*, offers a ritual undressing without the political connotations that complicate the *Wasps* exchange. In *Clouds*, Strepsiades' entry into the Thinkery is explicitly marked as an initiation.⁵⁶ As part of this rite, Strepsiades is asked to take off his *himation* before he enters the Thinkery. "To enter nude is the custom," says Socrates (γυμνούς εἰσιέναι νομίζεται, 498). In *Clouds*, the discarding of Strepsiades' clothes is turned into a joke on both men, when we learn that Socrates has filched the cloak and shoes (856–9, 1498). The famous philosopher turns out to be a petty thief, and his student is a dull dupe. As we will see in greater detail in [Chapter 4](#), *Frogs* also presents a costume exchange embedded in an initiatory context, since the main chorus of the play is a group of initiates who fill the play with imagery drawn from Eleusinian ritual.⁵⁷ In the midst of this, Dionysus and his slave Xanthias trade costumes (a Heracles disguise and a slave's baggage, respectively); eventually both are stripped and flogged. It has been suggested, by Ismene Lada-Richards among others, that their costume machinations echo ritual exchanges of clothing and ritual nudity.⁵⁸

Yet in *Clouds*, *Wasps*, and *Frogs*, the alteration of status promised by the "ritual" exchange of clothing proves superficial at best and laughably ineffective at worst. All three protagonists, it turns out, are incorrigible at the core, and a quasi-initiatory change of costume does little to alter that fact. Dionysus remains a coward in his Heracles outfit. Strepsiades burns down the Thinkery into which he has been initiated. Philocleon wreaks havoc in the aristocratic world into which he has been inducted, by dancing, farting, insulting the other guests, stealing a flute girl, and beating up those whom he encounters on his way home. Thus, while Aristophanes may draw upon initiatory patterns, including ritual changes of clothes, he is not very impressed with their ability to effect substantive change.

In *Wasps* Aristophanes offers an alternate model that may be more apposite than the initiatory one for understanding the relationship between costume and character. That model is Odysseus. Early in the play, the machinations of Philocleon as he attempts to escape from his house are twice explicitly modeled after Odyssean exploits. First, he mimics Odysseus's famous escape from the Cyclops' cave, tied to the bottom of a ram. Claiming that he wants to bring a donkey to market, Philocleon orders the donkey to be brought out of the house (173). The donkey is sluggish, and the slave who brings it out wonders whether it is carrying "some Odysseus" (181). When discovered clinging to the donkey, Philocleon continues the Odyssean charade by claiming to be "Outis [Nobody] ... from Ithaca, Son of Mr. Runaway" (Οὔτις ... Ἰθακὸς Ἀποδρασιππίδου, 184–5). Later, after the chorus has arrived and Philocleon still remains trapped inside, it suggests that he slip out "hidden in rags, just like *polymetis* Odysseus" (ῥάκεσιν κρυφθεὶς ὥσπερ πολῦμητις Ὀδυσσεύς, 351).

Here the “rags” may refer to Philocleon’s ratty *tribonion*. These references to the events of the *Odyssey* reinforce the wiliness of Philocleon that is emphasized early in the play.

The explicitly Odyssean references fall away as *Wasps* proceeds, and Philocleon’s uncouth performance at the symposium may seem a far remove from the epic hero’s cunning.⁵⁹ Yet in one sense the ending of *Wasps* is quite Odyssean. Like Odysseus among the feasting suitors, our protagonist, dressed in clothing that does not represent who he really is, wreaks havoc on a banquet of morally suspect partygoers by violently reasserting his essential self. Just as Odysseus temporarily submits to a beggar disguise but reasserts himself as a sublime epic hero, Philocleon temporarily submits to effete accoutrements but reasserts himself as an earthy comic hero.⁶⁰ In the end, Philocleon’s resemblance to Odysseus lies less in any wily shape changing than in his utter resistance to any actual change of character under the influence of potentially status-altering new clothing.

Philocleon’s final costume is not that of the average Athenian juror or elite symposiast, but that of a comic character stripped down to his bodily essence. During the symposium he becomes a kind of comic performer, mocking the participants and entertaining everyone with his rustic jokes (σκώπτων ἀγροϊκῶς, 1320).⁶¹ His audience applauds (1314). In the aftermath of the symposium, neither his *tribon* and *embades* nor his Persian cloak and *Lakonikai* are mentioned. If he is still wearing the latter set of clothes, they no longer have enough symbolic value to merit reference. Instead, the costume attention focuses on the comic body itself, in a flurry of deictic references to costume genitalia. It is therefore tempting to imagine that Philocleon has shed all clothing, wearing only his body stocking and phallus for the remainder of the play. Entering with a flute girl, Philocleon asks her to take hold of “this rope” (τουδὶ ... τοῦ σχοινίου 1342), namely his phallus. In the next line he cautions her that “the rope is rotten” (σαπρὸν τὸ σχοινίον 1343), but it doesn’t mind being rubbed (1344).⁶² Claiming to have rescued her from fellating the other symposiasts, he asks her to return a favor “for this prick” (τῷ πέει τῷδὶ 1347; cf. τοῦτῳ in 1349). There is a corresponding emphasis on the flute girl’s genitalia when Bdelycleon arrives and Philocleon tries to pretend that she is a torch. Father and son inspect the flute girl’s body(suit): Philocleon points to the place where it is “split” (ἔσχισμένην, 1373), Bdelycleon asks skeptically about “this black part in the middle” (τὸ μέλαν τοῦτ’ ... τοῦν μέσῳ, 1374), and then Bdelycleon queries, “And the part in the back, is this not her ass?” (ὁ δ’ ὅπισθεν οὐχὶ πρῶκτός ἐστιν οὐτοσί, 1376).

The dancing competition that ends the play continues the focus on the body. In passages with ithyphallic rhythm,⁶³ Philocleon refers to his lungs, nostrils, and vertebrae (1487–9); kicks of the leg (1491); joints and sockets (1494–5); and fist (1503). The chorus concludes with foot movements, leg kicks, and belly slaps

(1523–30). This emphasis on the comic body in the final scenes suggests that what is important in the end is neither the Athenian *tribon* and *embades* nor the aristocratic *chlanis* and *Lakonikai*, but bodily enjoyment and expression itself.

In light of the exuberantly uncontrolled finale of *Wasps*, it is worth noting finally that no one really controls costume in this play. If Bdelycleon, as some have suggested, represents the poet-director, then his theatrical production fails. Zachary Biles suggests that this failure of Bdelycleon to bring his father into high society is parallel to Aristophanes' own disappointment in the preceding year with his unsuccessful production of the allegedly sophisticated *Clouds*.⁶⁴ With regard to costume control, Bdelycleon is a precursor to the Euripides of *Women at the Thesmophoria*, who dresses his relative up and sends him to the Thesmophoria, with disastrous results.

THE CASE OF THE STOLEN CLOAKS: *ASSEMBLYWOMEN*

Assemblywomen offers costume dynamics that are reminiscent of the clothing exchange in *Wasps*, yet are integrated into the play's themes more extensively and with greater sophistication than in the earlier play.⁶⁵ As in *Wasps*, here too the removal of cloaks and footwear signals that a character has been prevented from participation in the city's public institutions, this time the assembly. But now, that political power and those pieces of costume are not just abandoned but are usurped by others – namely, the women who steal their husbands' clothes to infiltrate the assembly. The use of cross-dressing by female characters brings to the costume dynamics a gendered element that is completely absent from *Wasps*. Early in the play, the sex-specific elements of the women's disguises are emphasized: beards, body hair, skin color, and gendered clothing.

But even more central to *Assemblywomen*'s costume dynamics is the idea of clothing theft, which becomes a crucial mechanism for integrating the costume changes and cross-dressing with the play's socioeconomic themes.⁶⁶ I posit that the character Blepyrus views the pilfering of his cloak as an instance of the well-known crime of *λωποδυσία*, “clothing theft,” or more colloquially, “mugging.” Seen as such, the women's appropriation of the men's cloaks not only indicates gender role reversal, as does the rest of the disguise, but also symbolizes all that men stand to lose in the transaction. Furthermore, I argue that when he makes the association between the pilfered cloaks and *lopodusia*, Blepyrus opens the door for Praxagora (and, through her, the poet Aristophanes) to shift the cloaks' function from sex signifier to symbol of the *oikos-polis* dialectic at the play's core and of the economic issues that motivate the plot. The stolen *himatia* are thus the one piece of costume that is implicated in all the major themes of the play.

Just as *Wasps* had made the donning of *embades* and *tribon* a precursor to Philocleon's exiting the house to attend court, *Assemblywomen* indicates that

particular items of clothing are the husbands' normal assembly-going attire. As the women gather outside in preparation to attend the assembly, the shoes and cloaks are prominently featured multiple times: cloaks (lines 26, 40; cf. 99), boots (36, 47), and both boots and cloaks, as well as walking sticks (74–5). And, as I noted earlier, Praxagora explicitly connects boots with assembly attendance (269–71): “Put on the Laconians as quickly as possible, just as you’ve seen your husband do, whenever he intends to go to the assembly or outside.”⁶⁷ Likewise, when the husbands do appear dressed in their wives’ clothes, a neighbor indicates that he cannot go to the assembly until he finds his *himation* (351–3). These passages ensure that the women’s cross-dressing is presented as a transgression onto public space of the *polis* as much as an inversion of gender.

The prologue of *Assemblywomen* also introduces the “clothing theft” theme by emphasizing that the *himatia* worn by the women as part of their male disguise have been stolen from their husbands. As Praxagora awaits the arrival of the other women, she wonders whether it has been difficult for the women to steal (κλεψάσαις, 26) their husbands’ cloaks unobserved.⁶⁸ When one of the women arrives, she explains that all night long her husband was “rowing” her under the covers, so that she was just now able to take his cloak (ὥστ’ ἄρτι τουτὶ θοῖμάτιον αὐτοῦ λαβόν, 40).⁶⁹ Praxagora concludes her instructions to the women by ordering them to put on “the men’s’ cloaks, the very ones you stole” (καὶ θαῖμάτια τὰνδρεῖά γ’ ἅπερ ἐκλέψατε, 275). These early references to the stolen *himatia* suggest theft more generally (*klope*) rather than *lopodusia* in particular, but nevertheless they lay the groundwork for a theme that develops more explicitly in subsequent scenes.

The theft of cloaks from pedestrians appears to have been a common crime in classical Athens, so much so that there existed a set of special terms, including agent noun (λωποδύτης), abstract noun (λωποδυσία), and verb (λωποδυτέω) to denote the mugger and his crime.⁷⁰ In his study of theft in Athenian law, David Cohen cites two factors as constitutive of the specific offense of *lopodusia*: the stripping of the victim’s cloak and the use of physical violence.⁷¹ It is this element of violence, Cohen argues, that makes *lopodusia* such a serious crime, distinguished from mere “stealthy takings” (κλοπή) from other public or private places.⁷² For example, Antiphon 2.2.5, arguing a hypothetical murder case, asserts that it is likely that a man wandering around at night would be murdered for his *himation*. Cloak stealing is part of the violent assault allegedly perpetrated on Ariston, the speaker of Demosthenes 54 (*Against Conon*). The use of physical force in cases such as this may explain why the death penalty could be prescribed for convicted *lopodutai*.⁷³

While *lopodusia* can be represented thus as a serious crime involving βία (force), it is capable of being cast in a more jocular way as well, particularly since it often involves the drunkenness of one or both parties and the humiliation of the stripped victim. A closer look at Demosthenes 54 offers a glimpse into two

divergent rhetorical approaches to cloak stripping and the assault it entails. The plaintiff, Ariston, alleges that as he was walking through the agora one evening, he was assaulted by Conon (a man whose sons had quarreled with Ariston on a previous occasion) and his drunken companions, who stripped him of his cloak and beat him until he was near dead. Ariston claims (1, 24) that he could have prosecuted Conon via *apagoge* (summary arrest) for *lopodusia*, but instead he has chosen the milder *dike aikeias* (case for assault). Throughout the speech, Ariston is at pains to stress the severity of the attack: his injuries required the attention of a doctor (10–13); the women of the household wailed as if for a dead man when he was carried home (20); and it was uncertain whether he would live (1, 28). Ariston's presentation of the assault as a matter of utmost gravity is intended as a preemptive move against Conon's defense strategy, which will aim to make light of the incident.⁷⁴ Repeatedly, Ariston warns the jury that Conon will attempt to turn this all into a joke (εἰς γέλωτα καὶ σκώμματ' ἐμβαλεῖν πειράσασθαι, 13; cf. παίζοντες, 14, γελάσαντες, γέλως, 20). Ariston himself mentions outrageous mockery from Conon, most notably the allegation that Conon stood above the stripped and beaten Ariston and flapped his arms like a victorious fighting cock (9).

Conon's portrayal of the incident in comic terms, if indeed he used this strategy in his defense, would have been well grounded, since in fact cloak stealing is regularly described as a form of humiliation in Aristophanic comedy. The *Acharnians* chorus (1162–73) hopes that the stingy *choregos* Antimachus will be knocked down on his way home at night by some Orestes, presumably the same Orestes who is mentioned at *Birds* 712 as a clothing thief and again at *Birds* 1490–3 as one who would strike and strip anyone who happened to meet him after dark.⁷⁵ *Frogs* 715–17 evokes the dangers of nighttime strolls in the example of one Cleigenes, who fears that he will be stripped of his clothes when walking home drunk without his club. The buffoonish Euelpides in *Birds* vividly describes an unpleasant encounter he had with a clothing thief once, when, mistaking a rooster's cry as an indication that it was dawn, he ventured out late at night (*Birds* 496–8):

κἀγὼ νομίσας ὄρθρον ἐχώρουν Ἀλιμουντάδε, κάρτι προκύπτω
 ἔξω τείχους καὶ λωποδύτης παῖει ῥοπάλῳ με τὸ νῶτον·
 κἀγὼ πίπτω μέλλω τε βοᾶν, ὃ δ' ἀπέβλισε θοῖμάτιόν μου.

And I, thinking it was dawn, was going to Halimous, and I just poke
 my head
 outside of the wall, and a clothing thief strikes me in the back with a club;
 and I fall and I'm trying to cry out, and he filched my cloak.

The speaker of Alexis fr. 112, when he sees the chorus of revelers approaching, prays that he may never meet up with such a group late at night, or he won't escape with his *himation*.⁷⁶ Opportunistic clothes snatching, technically *klope*

rather than *lopodusia*, occurs in Aristophanes as well.⁷⁷ For example, early in *Clouds* Strepsiades hears of a *himation* that Socrates filched from the palaestra (178–9); as we have already seen, Strepsiades soon stupidly hands over his cloak and shoes to Socrates, who, of course, steals them (*Clouds* 497–500, 856–9, 1498).

Mugging scenarios in comedy thus share features with the accounts given elsewhere: the victim is stripped of his cloak by means of physical violence, almost invariably at night in a public location. These basic elements nevertheless can be represented in quite divergent ways, depending on the speaker's (or author's) purpose and point of view. On the one hand, an author can emphasize the serious and even potentially deadly consequences that *lopodusia* brings for both parties. The crime can be represented as having arisen from dire economic necessity, as Aristotle suggests in *Politics* when he cites τὰ ἀναγκᾶ as a possible motivation for *lopodusia*.⁷⁸ At the same time, as the comic passages illustrate and the victim himself in Demosthenes 54 admits, cloak stripping can be associated with mockery and is full of comic possibilities. In *Assemblywomen*, the fact that the stolen cloaks at issue are part of the characters' visible costume heightens the potential to exploit all of these various connotations of *lopodusia*.

The confrontation between Praxagora and her husband, Blepyrus, in *Assemblywomen* begins to associate the theft mentioned in the prologue more closely with actual mugging. Absent his own *himation*, Blepyrus has been forced to wear his wife's yellow garment as he makes a humiliating trip to the outhouse. As scholars have observed, the spectacle of Blepyrus in female attire provides a counterbalance to the women's transvestism in the opening scenes.⁷⁹ Blepyrus explains, both to the audience and to a neighbor in the same plight, that he has been unable to find his cloak (313–19, 333–4). When Praxagora returns home and both husband and wife are restored to their normal attire, he asks indignantly where she has been.⁸⁰ Not satisfied with her excuse that she was out helping a pregnant neighbor, he demands to know why she took his cloak rather than her own (535–8):

εἴτ' οὐ τὸ σαυτῆς ἱμάτιον ἔχρῃν σ' ἔχειν;
ἀλλ' ἔμ' ἀποδύσας, ἐπιβαλοῦσα τοῦγκυκλον,
ῥῆχου καταλιποῦς ὥσπερ εἰ προκείμενον,
μόνον οὐ στεφανώσας οὐδ' ἐπιθεῖσα λήκυθον.

Then shouldn't you have had your own cloak?
But you stripped me, threw your mantle on me,
and left, abandoning me like a corpse laid out,
all but wreathing me and adding an oil flask.

Apparently Blepyrus was using the *himation* as a blanket while he slept, so he can assert with some exaggeration that Praxagora stripped him and left him lying there like a corpse. These lines evoke three clothing-related actions in quick

succession, each one important for the play's themes: first, cloak stealing; second, transvestism; and third, the placing of a shroud on the deceased as part of the funeral *prothesis*. I will treat each of these in turn, while focusing in the end on *lopodusia*, which continues to be developed throughout the ensuing scenes.

By declaring that the cloak was taken from his person (e.g., rather than snatched from a chair), and by using the same verb (ἄποδύσασ', 536) that is common in descriptions of *lopodusia*, Blepyrus elevates the seriousness of the theft and casts himself as the victim of a mugging.⁸¹ The dialogue leading up to this scene has set the stage by including repeated references to the time when the clothes were taken – in the dark of night, just as in *lopodusia*.⁸² The corpse simile in lines 537–8 on one level also continues the mugging image by serving as a substitute for the physical violence that accompanies a real mugging and can even lead to death.⁸³ “You stripped me and left me for dead” is an accusation that one can easily imagine directed at a mugger, and indeed precisely this allegation is made against Conon in Demosthenes 54. Thus, three of the common elements in a mugging are present here: nighttime, a stripped cloak, and physical violence. The significance of the location of the mugging emerges in subsequent lines.

Woven into this scenario in the latter half of line 536 is also a reminder of the feminization of Blepyrus. Praxagora allegedly not only stripped Blepyrus during the night but also, according to Blepyrus, threw on him her own *enkyklon*, a female outer garment. Thus, the alleged robbery is also an exchange of gendered clothing. Blepyrus has in fact changed his story slightly since 317–18, when he said simply that he had grabbed his wife's dress when he couldn't find his own; now he says that she threw her mantle on him.⁸⁴ The chiasmic juxtaposition of ἔμ' ἀποδύσασ' and ἐπιβαλοῦσα τοῦγκυκλον in line 536 emphasizes the two parts of this exchange, and also Praxagora's agency in both parts. While the mention of clothing exchange briefly reminds the audience of the transvestism they just recently viewed, the new emphasis on Praxagora as agent matches Blepyrus's current tone of victimization – he is the passive victim, she the perpetrator.

Furthermore, the act of throwing a cloak on a stripped body calls to mind traditional duties that a woman performs over a dead family member. One envisions, for example, the red-figure kylix (Malibu 86.AE.286) on which Tecmessa is depicted covering the naked body of the dead Ajax with a cloth, or her haste to cover his exposed body in Sophocles' play.⁸⁵ In the image created by Blepyrus, this covering of the body leads into the *prothesis* simile developed more explicitly in the following two lines (537–8), which refer to the laid-out corpse, oil flask, and wreath. The passage concludes with the key word λήκυθον, which will be developed as a “prime symbol of death” throughout this play.⁸⁶ The words of Blepyrus recall the treatment of *Lysistrata*'s Proboulos, another male character dressed first as a woman and then as a corpse by impudent

women (*Lys.* 599–610).⁸⁷ As in *Lysistrata*, here, too, women misapply their traditional duty of caring for the dead to a living man, to his detriment and outrage. The reference to the crime of *lopodusia* adds to the negative portrayal of Praxagora's actions. Instead of fulfilling her female obligations, she has perpetrated a crime that would normally be committed by a man. In an exaggerated depiction of the deleterious effect on men when their wives usurp both their clothing and their political status, the act of women disguising themselves in their husbands' *himatia* results in the men's feminization, mugging, and even (figurative) death.⁸⁸ Such is the view, in any case, presented by Blepyrus.

Although the audience may be laughing at Blepyrus's exaggerated expression of self-pity, Praxagora seizes the opportunity to exploit it. Picking up on her husband's allusion to mugging, she disingenuously claims that she took his boots and staff to *protect* the cloak from being stolen (544–6).⁸⁹ She, of course, interprets her own actions as being for the benefit, not the detriment, of Blepyrus: ultimately to save his cloak, not to steal it. Praxagora continues to promote this positive view of her own intentions as she outlines her agenda, expanding the theme of *lopodusia* to encompass not just the husbands' *himatia*, but also clothing theft as a widespread social ill. The crime *λωποδυτῆσαι* (565) appears on Praxagora's list of the problems that will disappear under the newly established system of communally held property. Later she elaborates, claiming that no theft will occur in the remodeled society – or, if it does happen, it will not do any real harm, since a person can just go get a new cloak from the common store (667–71):

Βλ.	οὐδ' αὖ κλέπτῃς οὐδεὶς ἔσται;
Πρ.	πῶς γὰρ κλέψει, μετὸν αὐτῷ;
Βλ.	οὐδ' ἀποδύσουσ' ἄρα τῶν νυκτῶν;
Γε.	οὐκ ἦν οἴκοι γε καθεύδῃς.
Πρ.	οὐδ' ἦν γε θύραζ' ὥσπερ πρότερον· βίσιος γὰρ πᾶσιν ὑπάρξει. ἦν δ' ἀποδύῃ γ', αὐτὸς δώσει. τί γὰρ αὐτῷ πρᾶγμα μάχεσθαι; ἕτερον γὰρ ἰὼν ἐκ τοῦ κοινοῦ κρεῖττον ἐκείνου κομιεῖται.

Blep.	And no one will be a thief?
Prax.	How will he steal, when he has a share in it?
Blep.	And so they won't strip people during the night?
Neighbor.	Not if you are sleeping at home, at least!
Prax.	Not even if you go outside, as before; for everyone will have a livelihood. And if someone does strip someone, he will give the cloak voluntarily. For what good will it do him to fight? He will go and get another one, better than that one, from the common store.

This exchange further develops the notion that the theft of Blepyrus's cloak constitutes the crime of *lopodusia*. When Blepyrus asks whether people will

be stripped during the night (668), his words can refer either to the common crime or to his own experience of the preceding night. Repeated are the key words κλέπτω, previously used of the women's actions (26, 275), now in both noun and verb forms referring to thievery in general (667); ἀποδύω, used of Praxagora's theft of Blepyrus's cloak at 536 and now of muggers (668, 670); and references to nighttime, found repeatedly in the earlier scene and now again in 668. Most pointed is the neighbor's jesting remark (668) indicating, on the surface, that the streets will still be as dangerous as they were before, but one will be safe in his own home.⁹⁰ The second-person singular καθεύδης (668) can refer either to an imaginary subject ("one") or, more pointedly, to Blepyrus himself, since it recalls exactly what Blepyrus has in fact suffered: being stripped of his cloak while he was sleeping in his own home. A similar ambiguity may be present in ἀποδύη (670), which could temporarily be understood as a second-person passive ("if you are stripped") until the remainder of the line makes it clear that the form is third-person active, with the thief as understood subject ("if he strips"). Thus, even the verb morphology in this passage serves to blend the experience of Blepyrus into the general problem of clothing theft.

These same lines, by juxtaposing οἶκοι (668) and θύραζε (669), focus attention explicitly on the polarity of the household and the public arena. Shortly thereafter, Praxagora states her intention to make the whole city (τὸ ἄστυ) into one household (οἴκησις, 673–4). The characteristics of *lopodusia* are relevant to this *oikos-polis* theme, because, as we have seen, muggings typically happen to people who are walking through public places like the agora or other streets of Athens. The contrast between οἶκοι and θύραζε in 668–9 highlights the fact that Blepyrus has suffered a household version of a public crime. From one point of view, then, the mugging of the husbands by their wives in *Assemblywomen* can be seen as exemplifying the danger inherent in shattering the boundaries between *oikos* and *polis*: just as the women depart from the household to enter the public arena, a public crime enters the home. This threatening aspect of the *lopodusia* is the one played up by Blepyrus in his earlier encounter with Praxagora (535–8). Yet, as Helene Foley has argued, the *oikos* and *polis* are presented in this play not simply as polar opposites but in a more complex way, often as parallel realms with certain common interests.⁹¹ The intra-*oikos* mugging is a case in point. As we have seen in lines 667–71, it is the *parallels* between Blepyrus's experience and the wider social problems that receive the emphasis as Praxagora outlines her program. The connection drawn between the stripping of Blepyrus and the public nuisance of *lopodusia* is a way of bringing the issue home, so to speak. Given Blepyrus's oft-noted tendency to look toward his own interest, this is a shrewd and ultimately effective rhetorical strategy by Praxagora.⁹² Under her interpretation, Blepyrus's loss of his cloak becomes less emblematic of inversions of male-female and

public-private dichotomies than it is symptomatic of the societal problems plaguing Athens – problems that the women aim to solve.

By virtue of their association with *lopodusia*, the husbands' cloaks are embedded in the broader socioeconomic context depicted in *Assemblywomen*, in which poverty causes a host of social problems, from hunger to the lack of proper shelter and adequate clothing.⁹³ Indeed, the absence of proper clothing, whether through poverty or theft, is a recurrent motif in the play. A woman at lines 88–92, for example, says that she has brought some woolwork to do because her children are γυμνά, “naked.”⁹⁴ Clothing theft, being poor, and being naked are closely conjoined again at 565–7. The fullest portrayal of poverty-induced cloaklessness comes in Chremes' account of Euaeon's speech in the assembly (408–10):

μετὰ τοῦτον Εὐαίων ὁ δεξιώτατος
παρῆλθε γυμνός, ὥς ἐδόκει τοῖς πλείοσιν·
αὐτός γε μέντοῦφασκεν ἱμάτιον ἔχειν.

After this Euaeon, the really clever guy,
came forward naked, as it seemed to most people:
he himself, at any rate, claimed that he had a cloak.

Euaeon, whose cloak is so thin that he appears naked, proposes that the fullers (the only ones who have an excess of cloaks) offer warm clothing to the indigent.⁹⁵ When Euaeon's speech is reported by Chremes, Blepyrus himself is standing in his wife's clothes, lacking his own *himation*. In other words, one ill-clad character hears about another; it is no surprise, then, that Blepyrus and the neighbor are sympathetic to Euaeon's proposal.⁹⁶ Though the causes and severity of their respective states of undress differ – the saffron-clad Blepyrus is a victim of his wife's pilfering, whereas Euaeon's described state of undress results from poverty – nevertheless, the parallelism exists for audience members to observe. As the play develops, and Blepyrus's experience is more explicitly linked with *lopodusia*, Praxagora tries to capitalize on the interlocked interests of Blepyrus and economic sufferers like Euaeon. She promises that clothing theft and nakedness will disappear (565–6) and that the women will weave clothes for the men (654). Curing the economic problems that ail the city, she argues, would benefit both the poor cloakless Athenians, who will no longer be forced to steal, and the better-off citizens like Blepyrus, who will no longer have their cloaks stolen. By line 710, Blepyrus has been convinced by Praxagora's array of arguments. The stolen cloaks are thus a means of connecting Blepyrus's self-interest to the public interest and also of linking the hilarity of the play's cross-dressing to a serious economic issue. *Lopodusia* is a well-chosen vehicle for conveying this range of meanings, since it is capable of being cast in both a serious and a lighthearted way.

In his treatment of the stolen cloaks in *Assemblywomen*, Aristophanes employs comic techniques to raise serious issues, but he also displays a characteristically comic resistance to simple resolutions of those matters. As Praxagora's plan is implemented, we hear about piles of garments heaped up on couches, free for the taking (840). Geron, we are told, has discarded his old shoes and *tribon* and now sports an elegant *chlanis* (848–50). This exchange of clothing is voluntarily rather than violently achieved and involves a new-for-old rather than the more problematic female-for-male reversal. In other words, Geron experiences a positive outcome in matters of clothing, just as Praxagora had promised. If we look backward to *Wasps*, we can see that Geron's experience in *Assemblywomen* conveys precisely what might have happened to Philocleon himself if he had not been so incorrigible. But the sexual inversion of the women's agenda is not allowed to be entirely forgotten, despite Praxagora's success in refocusing Blepyrus's attention on how he stands to gain materially. An old hag comes onstage wearing a *krokotos* (879) that is just as grotesquely inappropriate on her as it was on Blepyrus several hundred lines earlier. The funereal images, particularly the lekythos, first mentioned by Blepyrus reappear in extended fashion, as a series of progressively older and fouler women demand the sexual favors of a young man.⁹⁷ Thus, while the economic redress reaches a positive resolution, the sexual inversion culminates in a scene that has been best described as “comically nightmarish.”⁹⁸

The cloaks in *Assemblywomen* thus perform a kind of bridging function, both within the play itself and within the Aristophanic corpus more generally. Within the play, the men's *himatia*, with their specific connection to *lopodusia*, are the hinge on which the cross-dressing of the play's opening scenes is turned into the redressing of social problems. The cloaks thus enable *Assemblywomen* as a whole to interweave the gender issues seen in earlier plays (*Lysistrata* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*) with the motif of clothing and political participation seen in *Wasps*, while at the same time shifting focus to the purely economic concerns soon to be developed in *Wealth*. *Assemblywomen* integrates costume and theme in an effective, economical way by exploiting the multiple associations offered by a set of stolen cloaks. Aristophanes gets a lot of mileage out of a simple piece of costume, one whose lack many audience members may have keenly felt themselves.

RAGS TO RICHES: *WEALTH*

Recent interpreters have been less quick than their predecessors to dismiss the theatrical effectiveness of *Wealth*, which like *Assemblywomen* uses costume very economically. In *Wealth*, changes in clothing represent socioeconomic reversals, as they did in *Wasps* and especially *Assemblywomen*. As Anne Groton has demonstrated, the playwright pays careful attention to the manipulation

of costume in *Wealth* by making rags and garlands the primary visual symbols of the play.⁹⁹ Initially, almost every character in the play is wearing rags. As the play proceeds, the restoration of Wealth brings better costume to nearly everyone involved, most notably Wealth himself. The ragged costumes of the early part of the play have tragic associations, so that the change from worse to better attire is also a movement from tragic to comic garb. *Wealth* also devotes significant attention to the comic body, especially the mask. In a development characteristic of the fourth century, the most grotesquely prominent comic body belongs to the bomolochic slave character.

Changes in clothing are used to represent each of two different approaches that *Wealth* takes to the city's economic troubles and their resolution.¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, the problem is that wealth is unfairly distributed – the wicked are wealthy, and the good are poor – because the god Wealth is blind. Restoration of Wealth's sight reverses this situation and restores a proper alignment between the material and the moral. The exchange of clothes between an honest man and a (proverbially wicked) informer (823–958) enacts this redistribution of wealth to the appropriate people. This costume exchange exemplifies the type discussed in [Chapter 1](#), where there is a concern for proper alignment between outer appearance and inner character. On the other hand, the problem imagined in *Wealth* is impoverishment in general, and accordingly the restoration of Wealth brings a more universal enrichment of society. This general movement from poverty, represented by rags, to wealth, represented by better clothing, is the more dominant costume dynamic in the play, and is exemplified most fully in the allegorical figure of Wealth himself.

In tandem with the economic improvements signified by costume in *Wealth* is a movement away from an initially tragic appearance. Key elements of tragic costume – rags, which Aristophanes has associated with Euripidean tragedy since at least *Acharnians*, and the blinded mask, most famous from the Sophoclean Oedipus plays – are replaced with the brighter garb and sighted mask more suited to a positive (i.e., comic) vision. The wreaths worn by protagonists at the play's outset, with their tragic associations of supplication and oracular consultation, are replaced midway through the play with garlands that have more joyful connotations of victory and celebration.¹⁰¹ I have argued elsewhere that *Wealth* has a particularly strong relationship with Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, an association that buttresses the play's thematic concerns with disease, healing, and redemption.¹⁰² But at the same time as it uses Sophocles as a model, *Wealth* also presents a more general visual transformation in its costume from tragic misery to comic celebration.

At the start of the play, the character Wealth is in a sorry state. We learn from the two other characters who enter stage behind him that he is wretched (ἀθλίως διακείμενος, 80), dirty (αὐχμῶν, 84), and blind (τυφλόν, 90). One character, the slave Cario, describes him to the chorus as “slovenly, stooped,

wretched, wrinkled, bald, toothless.”¹⁰³ There is even something wrong with his phallus: Cario surmises that Wealth’s foreskin is retracted (267), an unusual condition.¹⁰⁴ His pathetic condition thus manifests itself in several parts of his physical appearance: his clothes (dirty), his body (stooped), his mask (wrinkled, bald, toothless), and his phallus (abnormal).¹⁰⁵ None of this has a strict allegorical correlation to the economic predicament besetting Athens: Why would Wealth himself be beggarly, if the problem is really that he is distributing himself to the wrong people? And if Wealth himself is poor, what benefit can he bring to people? The point being communicated visually at the start of the play is a more general one – namely, that everything having to do with Wealth is awry.¹⁰⁶

The squalor and blindness of Wealth also mark him as a tragic character. He or his condition are repeatedly called ἄθλιος (“wretched,” 80, 118, 266, 654), a word with strong tragic coloring.¹⁰⁷ This is the same word used repeatedly by Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians* when he seeks the costume of the pitiful Euripidean hero Telephus (*Ach.* 384, 420, 422). Wealth’s filthy clothes, and indeed the tattered clothes of many characters in the play, recall the rags of tragic characters. Elsewhere Aristophanes associates ragged costume most notoriously with Euripidean tragedy, but rags are used by Aeschylus and Sophocles as well.¹⁰⁸ Wealth’s blindness recalls that of Oedipus, a character so famed for his blindness that he can be recognized by his mask and rags at Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* 555–6.¹⁰⁹ Other tragic characters parodied by Aristophanes for their blindness are a Sophoclean Phineus (parodied at *Wealth* 635–6) and a Euripidean Phoenix (mentioned at *Acharnians* 421). While certain features of Wealth’s physical condition are given comic coloring (e.g., toothlessness, baldness, phallic deformity), there are ample tragic precedents for physical deformity, such as Philoctetes, Bellerophon, and Telephus (again, all cited in *Acharnians*).¹¹⁰

On the basis of visual cues, then, before the audience of *Wealth* knows the identity of this blind, decrepit old man (an identity withheld until line 77), its best guess is likely to be that he is a (para)tragic character, perhaps most closely resembling the blind old Oedipus in squalid clothes who enters the stage at the beginning of Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*.¹¹¹ The fact that his followers have just returned from Delphi, wearing laurel wreaths and reporting Apollo’s oracular response, heightens the paratragic tone.¹¹² When Chremylus proposes to restore Wealth’s sight, he suggests in effect that they reverse the action of *Oedipus the King* by moving from blind mask to sighted one. This transformation will affect other aspects of costume as well, but a primary locus of reversal is the mask itself.

Before Wealth undergoes his transformation, we are treated to a visit from Poverty herself, who appears onstage to challenge the utility of the plan to restore Wealth’s sight. In this scene, the connection between clothing and

economic status is reiterated. In the argument about economics, garments are a prime example cited by both Poverty and the protagonists on behalf of their positions. Poverty says that without the need to earn a livelihood, no one will weave, so a man will not be able to adorn his bride in dyed variegated cloaks (ἱματίων βαπτῶν ... ποικιλομόρφων, 530). Chremylus retorts that under Poverty, people have rags instead of a *himation* (ἀνθ' ἱματίου μὲν ἔχειν ῥάκος, 540), which indeed is the condition of almost everyone in the play. Thus, as in *Assemblywomen*, clothing forms part of the discussion about the city's economic problems, and as we will see, the characters' actual clothing and changes of clothing enact some of those dynamics onstage.

Furthermore, the scene with Poverty introduces an element of generic rivalry, as now Poverty is fashioned as an explicitly tragic figure in contrast with the comic protagonists. The physical form taken by Poverty is significant for the play's juxtaposition of tragic and comic costume. Because of her stated effect on others' clothes (she makes them wear rags), it is likely that her clothing, too, is tattered. Moreover, Poverty is explicitly characterized as tragic: "Maybe she's a Fury from tragedy; at any rate she's got a crazed and tragic look," conjectures Blepsidemus as he tries to figure out who she is.¹¹³ Pale (422), female, terrifying, and threatening to the prosperity of the land, she does resemble the Furies as known from tragedy and widespread depictions on vase paintings.¹¹⁴ As Pavlos Sfyroeras has argued, her ideology also accords well with a tragic approach.¹¹⁵ For example, Poverty claims to make men better (βελτίονας, 558), an argument made on behalf of tragedy by Euripides in *Frogs*.¹¹⁶ The protagonists and their project of restoring wealth, on the other hand, are marked as comic. Poverty accuses Chremylus of "try[ing] to mock and joke, neglecting the serious" (σκώπτειν πειρᾶ καὶ κωμῳδεῖν τοῦ σπουδάζειν ἀμελήσας, 557). In a reference to the comic body, she belittles the gouty, pot-bellied, thick-calved, obscenely fat figures created by Wealth, contrasting the tough, wasp-waisted men that she creates.¹¹⁷

The slave Cario, who is called out next, best exemplifies the kind of comic body that Poverty disparages. Early in the play, as he informs the chorus about the appearance of Wealth, he launches into a raunchy Odyssean parody full of comic scurrilities (σκώμματα, 316) that include reference to the chorus's self-fellation (295), Circe's dung-eating pigs (305), and Cario strung up by the testicles with his nose rubbed in dung (312–14). After the Poverty scene, Cario's report of the incubation of Wealth further extends his association with bodily functions. He says that he will report everything "from feet to head" (ἐκ τῶν ποδῶν εἰς τὴν κεφαλὴν, 650), a bodily metaphor fitting for this character. Because Cario is driven by his stomach (320–2, 672–83), his report of the events in Asclepius's shrine includes an account of his theft of some broth, as well as the farting that erupted from his own inflated stomach (698–9) during the incubation. Next he describes how he covered himself up with his cloak

(707; cf. 714); then he repeats a joke as old as *Acharnians* about being able to see through holes in the cloak (714–15). One can imagine that the actor enlivens this narration with gestures toward his belly and physical manipulation of his cloak. Finally, he completes his “toes to head” narration by describing the snakes licking the eyes of Wealth (727–38) and the garlanded people who accompanied Wealth on his return (757).

The bomolochic, body-focused antics of Cario contrast with the paratragic introduction given to Cario’s report of the incubation, which is set up as a messenger speech.¹¹⁸ In line 632, the chorus surmises that he is a “messenger of something good” (ἄγγελος χρηστοῦ τινος), namely a comic version of a tragic messenger. The paratragedy continues as Cario quotes Sophocles’ *Phineus* at lines 634–6, and the chorus uses dochmiacs, a tragic meter, to inquire about the good news at 637–40. Parts of Cario’s narration of the incubation of Wealth find parallels in the messenger speech in *Oedipus at Colonus* that reports the astonishing events surrounding the last moments of Oedipus’s existence. In each case, an old, blind man in dirty clothes is washed and dressed in new clothes before a miraculous transformation.¹¹⁹

A crucial difference between *Wealth* and *Oedipus at Colonus* is that while the transformation of Oedipus is shrouded in mystery, Aristophanes’ comedy spells out the transformation’s effect in explicit ways. First is the physical appearance of Wealth himself. The audience receives a brief glimpse of Wealth at 626, dressed in his ritual white garb on his way to the Asclepium. After Cario’s narration of the healing, Wealth makes another brief appearance at 771, just long enough to greet the sun and the land of Cecrops and to promise that, now that he is sighted, he will reverse his ways; then he departs into Chremylus’s house.¹²⁰ It is hard to imagine that his newly granted sightedness would not be conveyed visually here, most likely by means of a new mask. Finally, Wealth makes a wordless appearance at the very end of the play, when he is installed on the Acropolis. Much like the rejuvenation of Demos in *Knights* (1321–34), here too the clothing change of an allegorical figure is highly symbolic. The physical restoration of Wealth’s appearance marks the overall reversal from indigence to comfort, a change from which Athens in general can hope to benefit.

After Wealth has recovered his sight, the transformed circumstances are enacted through another symbolic exchange of clothing, but this time one that focuses on aligning costume with character. A Just Man appears wearing a nice *himation* but accompanied by a slave still carrying his old tattered *tribonion* and shoes in order to dedicate them to the god (842–9). This Just Man is a visual echo of Wealth himself: like Wealth, he was formerly wretched (ἄθλιος, 825, 833) but has traded his ragged clothes for better ones. When an informer arrives on the scene, Cario and the Just Man order the informer to strip off his own *himation* (926) and shoes (927); the informer protests the attack (930, οἶμοι τάλας, ἀποδύομαι μεθ’ ἡμέραν, “Alas, poor me, I’m being stripped in

broad daylight!”) but the two men force him to wear the old *tribonion* with the shoes tacked to his forehead as an added insult.¹²¹ While the dressing down of the informer echoes the plight of characters like Blepyrus in *Assemblywomen*, the Proboulos in *Lysistrata*, or the Relative in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, the gender-centered costume antics of those plays have been replaced in *Wealth* by a use of costume that is centered primarily on more straightforward economic symbolism.¹²²

Wealth’s transformation is echoed in the attention paid to costume and especially mask in the next episode, which involves a young man who has metaphorically regained his sight. We learn that the handsome (εὐπρόσωπον, 976) young man used to offer sexual favors to the old woman for financial gain, including a cloak, shoes, and clothes for his mother and sisters (982–5). Now that he no longer needs her money, the young man has, in essence, regained his sight and now sees her as she really is. According to the old hag, the youth used to say “what a soft and beautiful expression I had” (τὸ βλέμμα θ’ ὡς ἔχοιμι μαλακὸν καὶ καλόν, 1022). Now, when the young man enters the stage, he notices her white hair (1043), “how many wrinkles she has on her face” (ἐν τῷ προσώπῳ τῶν ρυτίδων ὅσας ἔχει, 1051), and her missing teeth (1057–9), as though he is seeing them for the first time. The physical deficiencies represented in Wealth’s mask at the beginning of the play are mirrored in the old woman’s mask now. The old hag also recalls Poverty, that other old woman whose face, with its “crazed and tragic look,” received explicit attention. A sequence of jokes about washing the woman like so many dirty clothes (1060–5) calls to mind the clean white tunic put on by Wealth before his incubation. The clothes-cleaning jokes culminate with Chremylus’s assertion that a good washing would only reveal “the rags of her face” (τοῦ προσώπου τὰ ῥάκη, 1066). As I noted in [Chapter 2](#), this line refers to the actual construction of the mask from scraps of linen. Mask, costume, and theme are all beautifully united in this phrase, which turns the paratragic rags of the play’s beginning, and the Fury-like tragic mask of Poverty, into the physical material of an old hag’s comic mask.

FOUR

DISGUISE, GENDER, AND THE POET

The layer of costume we examine next is disguise, the topmost layer of costume added to a comic actor's σκευή.¹ In each of the three plays treated in this chapter, a central character takes on a disguise for an extended period of time: in *Acharnians*, Dicaeopolis dons a beggar costume explicitly modeled after Euripides' Telephus; in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, the Relative at Euripides' instigation takes on a female disguise acquired from the tragic poet Agathon; in *Frogs*, the god of theater, Dionysus, wears the lion skin and club of Heracles as he goes to Hades in search of Euripides. As even the briefest summary indicates, this focus on disguise brings with it an explicit engagement with tragic theater and the nature of mimesis itself. In all three of these comedies, the tragic poet Euripides appears onstage as a character; the tragedians Agathon and Aeschylus also make appearances in *Women at the Thesmophoria* and *Frogs*, respectively.

These three plays' engagement with tragedy, particularly Euripidean tragedy, may help explain another distinction they share: a visually arresting scene from each seems to have left its mark in the fourth-century southern Italian archaeological record. Best known is the Würzburg bell-krater (Figure 13) that depicts the Telephus parody in *Women at the Thesmophoria*:² a man with razor stubble and female dress kneels on an altar, holding a footed wineskin in one hand and a sword in the other, while a female figure rushes in with a large vessel to catch the wineskin's "blood." Less well known is a scene depicted on three late fourth-century Apulian oil vessels: a figure kneels on an altar

with sword in one hand and hostage in the other – but this time the hostage is a basket, and both the character's swollen belly and his enormous phallus mark him unambiguously as a comic male. This, too, looks like a Telephus parody; the most economical explanation is that this is in fact Dicaeopolis with the basket of charcoal in *Acharnians*.³ Third, an Apulian bell-krater once in Berlin depicts what has been plausibly argued to be the opening scene of *Frogs*: a Heracles figure knocks at a stage door; he is followed by a slave on a donkey, carrying a large bundle on a pole.⁴ The identifications of these latter two scenes with the extant Aristophanes' plays are less certain than that of the Würzburg Telephus, but all three indicate the strong visual effect of key scenes involving disguise in these comedies.⁵ Another visual representation of comic disguise, the so-called St. Agata Antigone bell-krater, offers intriguing parallels to these plays' preoccupation with metatheatrical impersonation – in particular, with the cross-gender disguise of *Women at the Thesmophoria*.

While the famous paratragic scenes have dominated scholarly discussions of these plays, each of their respective disguises is embedded in a pattern of costume manipulation within its play as a whole. Dicaeopolis's Telephus disguise, for example, needs to be considered in light of other costume-related actions in the play, including the manipulation of Lamachus's equipment, the impostors in the assembly scene, and the Megarian's daughters dressed as pigs. The Relative's female disguise in *Women at the Thesmophoria* is part of a nexus of costume interactions that implicate both Agathon and Euripides as well. Dionysus's Heracles disguise is balanced by and eventually traded for another set of costume pieces, Xanthias's slave baggage (which, if the Berlin vase is any indication, is enormous and visually preponderant). As I suggested in [Chapter 1](#), disguise should be understood as participating in the same costume-control dynamics that operate in the other layers as well. The physical manipulation of disguise works on the same principles as the handling of the character's original layer of clothing: exposure of a disguised figure involves stripping his or her costume. Furthermore, the less physical but equally aggressive act of seeing through another's disguise or fooling others with one's own disguise operates on the same principles. Seeing disguise dynamics as an extension of physical competition helps us to understand why the language of sexual aggressiveness is so often employed by Aristophanes in disguising scenes, both in the physical manipulation of costume and in the less tangible permeation of disguises.

Because of their shared preoccupations with theater itself and in some cases even their reworking of the same stage action, these three plays (and especially *Acharnians* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*) also demand to be understood in light of each other.⁶ Nevertheless, *Women at the Thesmophoria* in particular has often, especially in scholarship with interest in gender or mimesis, been singled out for attention by scholars who show little interest in *Acharnians*.

For example, Anne Duncan offers a thoughtful and illuminating discussion of Agathon in *Women at the Thesmophoria* as a figure onto which the playwright projects “anxieties about actors and acting” in the fifth century.⁷ But can we feel confident in drawing conclusions about fifth-century comic attitudes toward theatrical impersonation without considering the figure of Dicaeopolis, who is arguably the actor-poet par excellence of Aristophanic comedy? Too often *Acharnians* has been treated as though it has nothing to offer discussions of gender and mimesis, since it is not one of the “women plays.” Yet *Acharnians*, with its ultramasculine disguiser, is a crucial piece in the puzzle of gender and disguise in Aristophanic comedy. This in turn has a connection with the comic poet’s presentation of his own control over the elements of the theatrical production.

SUCCESS AND MASCULINITY: *ACHARNIANS*

In *Acharnians*, the assertive mastery and aggressive masculinity displayed by the protagonist Dicaeopolis has a clear manifestation in his control over costume.⁸ While the main showcase for Dicaeopolis’s manipulation of costume is the famous and much-studied scene in which he obtains a Telephus costume from Euripides, patterns of disguising and stripping throughout the play confirm that Dicaeopolis has the upper hand in costume.⁹ Our protagonist repeatedly detects other impostors and pulls off their disguises, but no one ever strips off Dicaeopolis’s apparel.

The centerpiece of costume manipulation in this play is the visit of Dicaeopolis to Euripides. Beset by the chorus of aggrieved Acharnians, Dicaeopolis conceives the idea of taking on a beggar disguise to win them over (383–4). He visits Euripides to obtain the necessary costume, which he accomplishes through a series of wheedling commands of escalating absurdity and impudence (414–78). Not satisfied with the beggar’s costume, he next requests a Mysian cap, a beggar’s staff, a little basket burned through by a lamp, a little cup with a broken lip, a little jar plugged with a sponge, some dried lettuce leaves, and finally some wild chervil, a gratuitous joke at the expense of Euripides’ allegedly vegetable-selling mother.¹⁰ It is clear who controls the stage here. The repetition of the imperative δός (gimme) by Dicaeopolis eight times in this scene conveys his imperious tone, and despite protestations to the contrary, Euripides gives him every prop he demands.

The now-disguised Dicaeopolis presents a multilayered figure to the audience: an actor is playing Dicaeopolis playing the Mysian Telephus (who is really Greek), playing a beggar. Each layer is represented by a part of the costume, with Dicaeopolis’s original costume only partly covered by the tattered beggar’s rags, and the Mysian hat indicating the identification with Telephus.¹¹

As Dicaeopolis makes his requests, he suggests that the audience and the chorus will see the layers of his costume differently (440–4):

δεῖ γάρ με δόξαι πτωχὸν εἶναι τήμερον,
εἶναι μὲν ὅσπερ εἰμί, φαίνεσθαι δὲ μή·
τοὺς μὲν θεατὰς εἰδέναι μ' ὅς εἰμ' ἐγώ,
τοὺς δ' αὖ χορευτὰς ἡλιθίους παρεστάναι,
ὅπως ἂν αὐτοὺς ῥηματίοις σκιμαλίσω.

It is necessary for me to seem to be a beggar today,
to be who I am, but not to appear to be;
for the spectators to know who I am,
but the chorus members to stand by like idiots,
so that with little phrases I can give them the finger.

This passage has drawn attention for the way it lays bare the main principle of dramatic irony – that the audience must know more than the characters do – in the midst of the many layers of disguise in the scene. There is a humorous contrast between the allusive tragic language of 440–1 (a near-quotation from Euripides' *Telephus*)¹² and the direct, prosaic explanation of 442–3, with its typically comic disregard for the dramatic illusion. Dicaeopolis is, in effect, trying to do just what vase painters do in depicting such scenes – to help the audience sort through the layers of complexity involved in his costume.

The last two lines of Dicaeopolis's pronouncement (443–4) also give some indication of the aggressiveness inherent in his disguising. He states explicitly that his purpose is to “give the finger to” the idiotic chorus members, who (unlike the audience) will not be able to see through his disguise. Not only is one rendered a fool when duped by a disguise, but the force of deceptive appearance and its concomitant verbal duplicity is analogous to an insulting obscene gesture (“up yours!”), conveyed by σκιμαλίσω in line 444.¹³ As we will see, sexual aggression plays a role in other costume interactions in this play as well.

The costume-related dominance of Dicaeopolis is further displayed in his interactions with the military man Lamachus. When the indignant half chorus calls Lamachus in to help, Dicaeopolis orders him to remove the most conspicuous parts of his armor, the Gorgon shield and the plume from his helmet (582–6):

Δι. ἄλλ', ἀντιβολῶ σ', ἀπένεγκέ μου τὴν μορμόνα.
Λα. ἰδοῦ.
Δι. παράθες νυν ὑπτίαν αὐτὴν ἐμοί.
Λα. κέϊται.
Δι. φέρε νυν ἀπὸ τοῦ κράνους μοι τὸ πτερόν.

- Λα. τουτὶ πτίλον σοι.
 Δι. τῆς κεφαλῆς νῦν μου λαβοῦ,
 ἵν' ἐξεμέσω· βδελύττομαι γὰρ τοὺς λόφους.
- Dic. But please, take the bogeywoman [i.e., the Gorgon shield] away
 from me.
 Lam. Done.
 Dic. Now put it upside down in front of me.
 Lam. It's lying there.
 Dic. Now bring me the plume from your helmet.
 Lam. Here's a feather for you.
 Dic. Now hold my head,
 so I can vomit; for I detest crests.

Just as he did with Euripides, here again Dicaeopolis strings together a series of imperatives to get his way with costume. The visual effect of Dicaeopolis gradually removing parts of Lamachus's attire adds to the humor of the beggar giving orders to the *miles gloriosus*.¹⁴ Although the tables have been turned, and Dicaeopolis is stripping someone else rather than equipping himself, this scene maintains the dynamic of costume control established in the Euripides scene. As Lamachus experiences the ultimate shame for a military hero, the loss of his armor, he is put into the same defeated position vis-à-vis Dicaeopolis as were the chorus members duped by Dicaeopolis's disguise. Like them, he is subjected to a sexual taunt from Dicaeopolis: "If you're strong, why don't you strip my cock? You're well-equipped" (591–2).¹⁵ With the words εὖοπλος ("well-armed," or "well-equipped") and ἀπεψώλησας (punning, I would suggest, on ἀπεσύλησας, from ἀποσυλάω, "strip off spoils")¹⁶ associating the phallus with military equipment, Dicaeopolis suggests that by stripping Lamachus's armor he has also emasculated him.

The pattern of arming and stripping recurs near the end of the play, when Lamachus again suffers the loss of his equipment. First (1095–1142), Dicaeopolis and Lamachus rearm themselves with sympotic and military equipment, respectively.¹⁷ Here the emphasis shifts temporarily from who controls the props to the nature of the accessories themselves. Dicaeopolis's provisions – food, wine, pillows – and future are considerably more desirable than the military rations and deprivation anticipated by Lamachus. This scene presents a direct duel between comic costume and military equipment: at lines 1122–3, Dicaeopolis's padded belly serves as the counterpart to Lamachus's shield; this follows an exchange in which he may also offer his phallus as a match to Lamachus's spear case (1119–21).¹⁸ When the wounded Lamachus makes his final appearance onstage (1190–1227), he has lost his plume and perhaps part of his shield, the same two items that Dicaeopolis had stripped from him once before.¹⁹ Thus, comic costume and comic protagonist emerge triumphant again from a battle with military equipment.

In addition to the Lamachus scenes, two other episodes that frame the Telephus scene complement its costume dynamics by showing Dicaeopolis controlling the costumes of other disguisers. First, in the assembly, he sees through the disguise of the Persian eunuchs who accompany Pseudartabas, when he recognizes them as two effeminate Athenians (115–22). Later, in the Megarian scene, Dicaeopolis is not fooled by the two girls who have been disguised as “piggies” by their desperate father (729–835). Without stage directions, one can never be sure, but it seems likely that in the case of both the eunuchs and the piggies, Dicaeopolis makes the exposure obvious by pulling off part of their costumes. The word (ἐν)σκευάζω provides a verbal link between these two scenes and the Telephus disguise. It appears first in the Pseudartabas encounter when Dicaeopolis accuses Cleisthenes of coming dressed up as a eunuch (εὐνοῦχος ἤμιν ἦλθες ἐσκευασμένος; 121). Next Dicaeopolis uses it to refer to his own disguise (ἐάσατε / ἐνσκευάσασθαί μ’ οἷον ἀθλιώτατον, 383–4 = 436), and finally the Megarian has recourse to a similar stratagem and the same verb (χοίρους γὰρ ὑμεῖς σκευάσας φασὶ φέρειν, 739).²⁰ In each case the humiliation of the failed disguisers contains a sexual element. Cleisthenes, one of the two would-be eunuchs and a perennial butt of jokes for his effeminacy, is mocked with the phrase “you who shave your hot-desiring ass” (ὦ θερμόβουλον πρῶκτὸν ἐξυρημένε, 119), suggesting that he is a pathic.²¹ The Megarian scene centers around an obscene pun, with χοῖρος (piggy) acting as a double entendre for female genitalia. Like Lamachus, these two pairs of disguisers experience the degradation of exposure at the hands of Dicaeopolis.

The failed disguises of the eunuchs and the piggies, together with the stripping of Lamachus, serve to highlight by contrast Dicaeopolis’s successful control of his own costume. Our text gives no indication of when exactly Dicaeopolis removes his beggar disguise, but we can be sure that no other character removes any piece of Dicaeopolis’s costume or sees through his disguise. In the repeated attempts at disguise in *Acharnians*, Dicaeopolis humiliates his adversaries by exposing them as shams, but at the same time he emerges the biggest trickster of them all. A focus on costume control shows that what may seem a contradiction – that the exposé of fakery is himself master of pretense – is in fact part of a consistent pattern wherein Dicaeopolis is master manipulator of costume. Furthermore, his control over costume correlates with an uncompromised and aggressive masculinity, in contrast with the sexually charged humiliation of his opponents. My emphasis on Dicaeopolis’s mastery of physical exposure thus parallels Jeffrey Henderson’s observation that Dicaeopolis alone in *Acharnians* wields control over obscenity, a tool of verbal exposure.²²

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that this protagonist who handles costume so masterfully is uniquely linked to the poet himself. Because this topic has been discussed at length in scholarly literature, a quick review of the

connections between poet and protagonist will suffice here.²³ At 377–82 and 502–5, Dicaeopolis speaks as though he himself is a comic poet who has experienced attacks from Cleon because of his comedy. The words best fit the voice of a comic poet, usually assumed to be Aristophanes, though possibly his producer Callistratus instead.²⁴ The parabasis reaffirms the connections between the poet and protagonist that are first suggested in these two earlier passages. For a third time there is a reference to an attack on the poet, this time in the third person (630–2). The parabasis further fleshes out the Dicaeopolis–poet connection by claiming that the poet has done for the city what the audience has just seen Dicaeopolis do onstage. As Angus Bowie has demonstrated, each of the things for which the poet faults the city in the parabasis has been exemplified by participants in the assembly scene of *Acharnians*, and protested by Dicaeopolis.²⁵ Finally, the connection between Dicaeopolis and the *Acharnians* poet is reasserted when Dicaeopolis’s victory in the drinking contest parallels the anticipated victory of the poet in the dramatic contest.²⁶ Dicaeopolis’s triumphant words at 1224 signify his own victory and are at the same time an unmistakable reference to the dramatic competition: ὡς τοὺς κριτὰς μ’ ἐκφέρετε. ποῦ ‘στιν ὁ βασιλεὺς; (Bring me to the judges! Where is the king?).²⁷ Here again, and here most obviously, the association between protagonist and poet is used to confer the protagonist’s qualities on the persona of the poet.

Given this relationship between Dicaeopolis and the poet, his unambiguous control over costume has additional significance. The manipulation of σκευή intrinsically expresses a power relationship, in which the controller exerts power over the controlled. When the character is identified with the comic poet, as in *Acharnians*, that costume dominance has additional reference to the poet’s mastery over the elements of the dramatic production. In the case of *Acharnians*, it is important for the poet’s own project of self-aggrandizement that there be no doubt that he and his protagonist are the masters of costume and disguise. Furthermore, this character, representing the poet as he does, cannot be made to suffer humiliation via costume but must inflict that degradation on others.

FAILURE AND EMASCULATION: *WOMEN AT THE THESMOPHORIA*

Like *Acharnians*, *Women at the Thesmophoria* is a play filled with disguises and changes of costume. Indeed, many elements in *Women at the Thesmophoria* recall stage action in *Acharnians*. Both plays include a parody of the Telephus hostage-taking scene (*Ach.* 325–57, *Thesm.* 689–759).²⁸ In *Women at the Thesmophoria*, as in *Acharnians*, a tragic poet supplies the costume for a character’s disguise, in a similar sequence of events: the party in search of assistance is met first by the poet’s doorman, who uses tragic language to describe the tragedian’s poetic activity (*Ach.* 395–400, *Thesm.* 39–69); the poet is wheeled

out on the *ekkylema* (*Ach.* 407–9, *Thesm.* 96); the poet happens to have at hand an assortment of the ridiculous props necessary for the disguise (*Ach.* 431–79, *Thesm.* 218–63); and, at the conclusion of the scene, the disguised character departs in his new role (*Ach.* 480–9, *Thesm.* 279–93). It is clear that Aristophanes is reworking some of the same stage action from *Acharnians* into a far more complex drama. We have not one tragic poet but two and, as the comedy continues, not one Euripidean play parodied but four. Furthermore, *Thesmophoriazusae* ups the ante by including, perhaps for the first time, a character in cross-gender disguise. Thus, while *Acharnians* barely acknowledges the existence of women, *Women at the Thesmophoria* is explicitly concerned with what happens when a man puts on female clothes. This increased interest in femininity helps explain the disparity between the complete costume effectiveness of Dicaeopolis and the utter costume failure of the Relative.

The feminization-by-costume that the Relative experiences in *Women at the Thesmophoria* is prefigured by the effeminate appearance of the tragic poet Agathon early in the play, when Euripides and his Relative pay a visit to Agathon's house.²⁹ Just as Euripides finally explains the purpose of their visit – to persuade Agathon to infiltrate the all-female Thesmophoria in female disguise (88–92) – lo and behold, Agathon himself appears in female garb. Indeed, by the standards of the comic stage, Agathon is a man in name alone: his body exhibits absolutely nothing that betokens the comic male. We are told explicitly that he is not dark skinned, strong, or bearded (μέλας, καρτερός, 31; δασυπώγων, 33; δασύν, 160; cf. 190);³⁰ instead, he is attractive, pale skinned, smoothly shaven, female voiced, soft skinned, and nice to look at (εὐπρόσωπος, λευκός, ἔξυρμημένος, γυναικίφωνος, ἀπαλός, εὐπρεπῆς ἰδεῖν, 191–2). He also lacks a phallus, a *chlaina*, and men's shoes (142).³¹ As the Relative states on first seeing Agathon, “I don't see any man here, I see Cyrene” (97–8).³² As Stehle suggests, Agathon “is proof that one cannot take on the representation of women and remain a ‘man.’”³³ Yet Agathon does not quite measure up as a woman, either: he also lacks female breasts (143), and his accessories are an incongruous mixture of male and female attributes (137–40).³⁴ The Relative reacts to this mostly female apparition and his effete words with salacious mockery and proposes anal penetration.³⁵ Agathon in turn responds with half-baked gibberish about mimesis, setting up further rude comments from the Relative.³⁶ In sum, the Agathon scene presents the key themes and visual motifs that will be elaborated throughout the play: a costume that gives mixed visual cues about a character's gender; the association of the effete with tragedy; and the further link of the effeminate with sexual objectification.

As the Relative in turn takes on female attire, he begins to reembody this spectacle of a feminized male, and he himself will eventually experience the same sexual innuendoes projected at Agathon. Yet while Agathon sets a model for the Relative, there are important differences. Agathon's feminized

appearance is presented, for maximum visual impact, as a *fait accompli*, but the Relative's painful transformation into a visual double of Agathon takes place before the spectators' very eyes. This dressing scene, with its manipulation of many items of costume and props, offers a fuller demonstration of costume control dynamics than presented in the Agathon scene, where no actual putting on or taking off of costume pieces occurred. Another contrast between the two scenes is that Agathon's white, beardless mask and emasculated body are fairly accordant with his female attire. When he refuses to infiltrate the Thesmophoria, he is motivated not by fear of discovery but by the women's sexual jealousy of him. The Relative, by contrast, with his hairy body and prominent phallus, presents a far greater degree of incongruity when he takes on female garb.

Throughout this onstage dressing sequence, the Relative possesses only the barest minimum of control over his costume. To start with, the visit to Agathon is initiated and led by Euripides, with the Relative merely tagging along, clueless about where they are going and confused by Euripides' cryptic explanations. The disguise was not the Relative's idea, nor was it even Euripides' original plan to dress the Relative in female attire. Only after Agathon refuses to comply with Euripides' plan does the Relative volunteer to take on the disguise. Yet even this offer is formulated in such a way as to relinquish control: ἐμοὶ δ' ὅ τι βούλει χρῶ λαβών ("take me and do with me what you want," 212), a phrase which in military contexts denotes unconditional surrender.³⁷ In the dressing scene, the Relative is first subjected to painful shaving and singeing to remove his beard and pubic hair, signs of his masculinity.³⁸ Almost instantaneously, he regrets his offer to help (217), and his protestations, howls of pain, and attempt at escape indicate that this disguise is not a welcome one (215–42).³⁹ Meanwhile, an imperious Euripides issues commands (twenty imperatives in lines 213–78, including two prohibitive subjunctives and an implied imperative), and Agathon supplies the feminine apparel, which he just so happens to have at hand. The active aspects of Dicaeopolis's performance (conceiving the idea of the disguise, demanding props) have been transferred in *Women at the Thesmophoria* onto Euripides, leaving the Relative in a position more like the Megarian's daughters than like Dicaeopolis.⁴⁰

The Relative's helplessness in the dressing scene is just the first in a series of costume-related humiliations. When he takes his place among the women at the Thesmophoria, his speech in defense of Euripides not only fails to convince them but arouses their suspicion, though they do not at first doubt that he is a woman. The angry women threaten to punish him by plucking (536–9), a punishment that would be a reenactment of his previous mutilation and confirms the already obvious point that such an experience is negative. When Cleisthenes comes running in to inform the women of Euripides' plot, he phrases the situation tellingly, making Euripides the subject and the

Relative the object of the action: “Euripides singed him and plucked him and in everything else he dressed him like a woman” (ἄφευσεν αὐτὸν κατέτιλ’ Εὐριπίδης / καὶ τᾷλλ’ ἄπανθ’ ὥσπερ γυναικ’ ἐσκεύασεν, 590–1).⁴¹ As a result of Cleisthenes’ information, the women begin to strip the Relative (636–40):

- ΜΙ. ἀπόδυσσον αὐτόν· οὐδὲν ὕγιες γὰρ λέγει.
 Κη. καῖπειτ’ ἀποδύσετ’ ἐννέα παίδων μητέρα;
 Κλ. χάλα ταχέως τὸ στρόφιον ὠναίσχυντε σύ.
 ΜΙ. ὥς καὶ στιβαρά τις φαίνεται καὶ καρτερά·
 καὶ νῆ Δία τιτθούς γ’ ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἔχει.
 Μιc. Strip him! For he says nothing sound.
 Ρel. Then you’re going to strip a mother of nine children?
 Cleis. Quick, loosen your girdle, you shameless man.
 Μιc. What a sturdy one she seems, and strong –
 and by Zeus, she doesn’t have breasts, at any rate, like we do.

Thus the costume that was put on the Relative by someone else is now partially taken off by someone else. Like Lampito in *Lysistrata* (79–84), the Relative is sized up by a group of women who examine his physique. As the shaving and singeing of the dressing scene have already shown, it is not just items of clothing, but also parts of the Relative’s body – the comic actor’s costume – that elude his control. The women notice his lack of female breasts (640), and though the Relative tries to hide his phallus, it too gives him away (643–8).⁴² The structural parallelism with *Acharnians* is telling as well: when Lamachus runs in to assist the chorus, he is stripped by Dicaeopolis; when Cleisthenes runs in to assist the chorus, together they strip the Relative. In *Acharnians* (443), the duped chorus members were ἡλίθιοι, but here the dis-guiser himself is the idiot, as he himself admits, exclaiming ironically (592–3), “What man would be so foolish as to endure being depilated?” (τίς δ’ οὐτως ἀνὴρ ἡλίθιος ὅστις τιλλόμενος ἠνείχετο;). This scene offers a case study in both the degradation of stripping and the contiguity of the body and clothing on the comic stage.

Finally, the Relative cannot even remove his female costume when he wishes. As he is being bound Andromeda-like to a plank, he pleads with the Prytanis to have the archer strip him naked (939–42):

- γυμνὸν ἀποδύσαντά με
 κέλευε πρὸς τῇ σανίδι δεῖν τὸν τοξότην,
 ἵνα μὴ ᾿ν κροκωτοῖς καὶ μίτραις γέρων ἀνὴρ
 γέλωτα παρέχω τοῖς κόραξιν ἐστιῶν.

- Order the archer to strip me naked
 and tie me to the plank,
 so that I, an old man in saffron robe and headband,
 won’t offer laughter to the crows while I feast them.

Now that the Relative's identity has been discovered, he prefers the disgrace of being stripped, a punishment exacted upon defeated warriors and particularly degrading for an old man, to the even worse humiliation of wearing female clothes.⁴³ Just as striking as the close proximity of these two similarly debasing types of disgrace is the fact that it never seems to cross the Relative's mind that he could take off the clothes himself.⁴⁴ When the Prytanis refuses his request, the Relative's lament concisely expresses his victimization by his clothing (945): ὦ κροκῶθ', οἷ' εἰργασαί, "Saffron robe, what things you have done!"

In *Women at the Thesmophoria*, the costume-related failure that previously had been reserved for minor characters, like the piggies and the eunuchs in *Acharnians* and the Proboulos in *Lysistrata*, is given new prominence in the person of the Relative. As in these earlier examples, costume failure is related to sexual humiliation, particularly emasculation or feminization. This is most obvious with the eunuchs (by definition emasculated) and the Proboulos (turned into a woman), but even the exposure of the Megarian's daughters coincides with a pun about female genitalia. In *Women at the Thesmophoria*, the appearance of a cross-gender disguise brings this motif of feminization and costume failure to the forefront.⁴⁵ In contrast with Dicaeopolis, who was a successful disguiser with uncompromised, sexually aggressive masculinity, the Relative, at least once he begins to take on his disguise, is sexually demeaned, shorn of the very symbols of his masculinity, and ultimately foiled in his attempt to infiltrate the Thesmophoria. One might expect that his failure to play a woman with any success would highlight his incontrovertible maleness, and his phallus does help give him away at 643–8. On the other hand, and somewhat paradoxically, his move toward femininity via the disguise brings with it the female-associated qualities of passivity and sexual humiliation. One expression of this shift is in costume control; another is in the use of sexually abusive language. Prior to taking on the female disguise, the Relative assails the effeminately dressed Agathon with sexually aggressive insults that portray Agathon as the recipient of sexual penetration (153, 157–8, 200–1, 206); near the end of the play, the tables have been turned, and the Relative, now in female clothes and immobilized like Andromeda, is himself subjected to similar abuse from the archer (1114, 1119–20, 1123–4).⁴⁶ As Euripides and the archer inspect the Relative's body at 1110–24, they treat him just as they would a female Aristophanic sex object; the Relative, true to this role, is mute throughout the encounter.⁴⁷

A brief digression is necessary here in order to consider some implications of this argument. My suggestion that costume mastery in Aristophanes tends to correlate with masculinity, whereas costume failure tends to correlate with feminization, offers a qualification to a growing orthodoxy, in some quarters at least, about gender and mimesis in Greek drama. These aspects of *Women at the Thesmophoria* have drawn a good bit of attention, beginning

with Froma Zeitlin's groundbreaking work, "Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae*."⁴⁸ In her exploration of the relationship between gender and mimesis in this article and even more strongly in her work on tragedy, Zeitlin has posited that the feminine is inextricably linked with the mimetic, role-playing aspects of drama; the feminine therefore is "the mistress of mimesis, the heart and soul of the theater."⁴⁹ Zeitlin herself has been careful to leave some doubt about whether all her suggestions about the theater might include comedy, saying in one note, "It should be emphasized that I equate drama here with serious drama rather than with comic types.... To speak of theater, in the full sense of the word, then, is to speak first of tragedy."⁵⁰ Zeitlin's work has been so influential that her conclusions about *Women at the Thesmophoria* and tragedy have been generalized by others who suggest that all disguise and role-playing in all of Greek drama has something to do with femininity. For example, Lauren Taaffe's study of Aristophanes and women relies frequently on the concept of "inherent feminine theatricality," the idea that deception and role-playing are inherently female in the Greek mindset.⁵¹ This notion recurs in a book by Karen Bassi, as she draws general conclusions about disguise in Greek drama: "The adoption of any overt disguise is aligned with feminine subjectivity.... In general, disguise signifies the vulnerability of [the masculine] subject."⁵² The alleged connection between the female and the artificial has been remarkably persistent: most lately it has been accepted by Duncan, who speaks of "the artifice of femininity" in her study of Agathon.⁵³ This notion deserves examination and, I would suggest, modification.

I have already suggested in [Chapter 2](#), on the basis of the overwhelming visual record of male comic artificiality, that the gendering of concealment in comedy is more complicated than some have suggested. My interpretation of *Acharnians* and *Women at the Thesmophoria* gives further reason for caution in postulating feminine vulnerability or feminine theatricality for all comic disguisers. In particular, the pattern of successful costume control by an unambiguously male character in *Acharnians* ought to make us reconsider this position. In my argument, costume control in Aristophanes expresses a power relationship that is also often marked out in sexual terms, with the degraded, powerless person emasculated or feminized.⁵⁴ The ultramasculine Dicaeopolis stands as evidence that any loss of masculinity is associated not with disguising itself but with a failure to maintain one's disguise and with the degrading experience of having one's costume physically manipulated by someone else.⁵⁵ Most parallel with the situation in *Women at the Thesmophoria* is Euripides' *Bacchae*, whose affinities with comedy have long been noted.⁵⁶ In that play, the powerful Dionysus controls Pentheus's costume, Pentheus is feminized, and the result of his disguise is utter disaster.⁵⁷ To return to comedy, the women who take on male disguises in *Assemblywomen* choose to take on masculine attributes and

are rewarded with success in their plan; Praxagora's husband is forced to his own great embarrassment to wear female accoutrements that serve as a visible sign that their wearer has been bested.⁵⁸ Thus, rather than offering an example of female mimetic propensity, *Assemblywomen* confirms the correlation between control of costume, heightened masculinity, and success, on the one hand, and lack of control, emasculation, and failure, on the other. Disguise is not an inherently feminine and therefore suspect strategy in comedy, but rather it is one kind of comic contest that can either enhance or detract from a character's status. Though it has parallels in other genres, this is a characteristically Old Comic expression, associated as it is with self-assertion, one-upmanship, and humiliation of one's opponents.

The change from *Acharnians* to *Women at the Thesmophoria* in protagonists' level of costume control, from success to failure and from unquestionably masculine to compromisingly feminized, perhaps reflects broader developments in Old Comedy. Admittedly, given the state of evidence concerning the early history of comedy and of any comic poets beyond Aristophanes, conclusions here can only be highly speculative. In any case, *Acharnians*, coming near the beginning of Aristophanes' career, may represent an older ethos of comedy, which seems to have originated in a context that virtually ignored women.⁵⁹ Trickery and disguise, part of the genre long before female characters played any significant part in Old Comedy, are readily employed by male characters with no inherent imputation of femininity. On the contrary, success in these matters marks the comic hero. In the pattern of costume control and failure, the emphasis is not so much on the gender but rather on the success of the protagonist. But by 411, female roles have become far more important to Old Comedy. Indeed, having begun the year by producing what appears to have been the first female comic protagonist in *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes was no doubt freshly aware of the potential for incongruity between a male actor's body and a female character's costume.⁶⁰ It seems hardly a coincidence that the likely first female comic protagonist (*Lysistrata*) and the likely first comic protagonist in drag (the Relative) were produced in the same year, since the latter is in one sense a metatheatrical version of the former.⁶¹ But *Women at the Thesmophoria*, though responding to this more gender-complex dramatic universe of 411, does so in a way that is an extension of comic patterns of costume control evident as early as *Acharnians*, with a change of emphasis from costume success to costume disaster.

As Zeitlin has observed with great subtlety, the gender-bending in *Women at the Thesmophoria* is interwoven with issues of genre and with tragedy in particular, since this comedy that gives us our first extant transvestite disguise takes its impetus explicitly from Euripidean tragedy.⁶² In exposing the incongruity of men in female clothing, Aristophanes has focused on the most vulnerable crack in the dramatic illusion – the convention by which

male actors played female roles.⁶³ Herein lies the brilliance of *Women at the Thesmophoria*. If, as I have argued, there is an equation in comedy between feminization and costume-related ineptitude, what more appropriate way to mock tragedy than to expose the failings of its actors in women's clothing? By dressing up in female garb, the Relative is doing what tragic actors do routinely, and his degradation, on a metatheatrical level, also represents theirs; this becomes more explicit, of course, when he attempts to act out specific roles from Euripidean tragedy. As the Euripidean plots enacted by the Relative founder before an unreceptive internal audience (Critylla at 846–923, the archer at 1098–1135), they break down at the level not just of individual costume but of the internal dramas themselves. Critylla and the archer simply refuse to submit to the tragic illusion.⁶⁴ Tragedy fails to deceive, and its representatives in *Women at the Thesmophoria* are feminized – not only the Relative but also Agathon and Euripides, who ends the play dressed as an old woman. Comedy, of course, could be subject to the same charge, since it, too, employs male actors in female roles, and it does so in this very play. Nevertheless, it is significant that nowhere is the Relative, who fails so miserably with costume, directly linked to the comic poet in the manner of Dicaeopolis.⁶⁵

This brings us to the character of Euripides. While the Relative is an unmitigated disaster when it comes to costume, Euripides has more mixed success. As I have already mentioned, Euripides takes on a few of the active qualities of Dicaeopolis in the initial costuming scene. He initiates the disguise plot and issues the costume-related commands to both Agathon and the Relative. Euripides himself appears again in the second half of the comedy to play several roles from his own tragedies (Menelaus, Perseus, possibly Echo)⁶⁶ and finally a comic role as an old procuress who distracts the Scythian archer with a dancing girl so that the Relative can escape. While the accelerating plot allows no time for extended treatment of each change in Euripides' costume, he does have limited success with his own disguises. At 896–901, Critylla takes Euripides for the shipwrecked sailor he pretends to be, but at 920–1 she realizes that he is the Relative's accomplice. In the final scene, the archer is too distracted by the dancing girl to notice that it is Euripides underneath the old-woman disguise. There is no indication that Euripides' σκευή, at any level, is physically handled by anyone else, nor is he ever the object of sexually aggressive insults. Those who detect pro-Euripidean sympathies in Aristophanes will be pleased to note that in *Women at the Thesmophoria* he spares Euripides himself the degree of physical humiliation heaped upon the Relative or Agathon. Here, the character of Agathon bears the brunt of the connection between tragedy and the effete. At the same time, Euripides' plots nevertheless miscarry repeatedly. While the Relative's inadequacy lies in the realm of costume control,

Euripides' contribution to the disaster comes on the level of plots. The only true success occurs when Euripides abandons his own *μηχαναί* and adopts a comic stratagem to hoodwink the archer. As an indication of the Pyrrhic nature of his victory, Euripides ends the play bearing the sure sign of a loser: disguise as a woman.

IMAGE OF A FAILED FEMALE DISGUISE: THE ST. AGATA ANTIGONE

The fascinating scene on an early fourth-century Apulian bell-krater known as the "St. Agata Antigone" presents at its center a cross-gender disguise (Figure 22).⁶⁷ This portrayal of a male caught while impersonating a female bears fruitful comparison with the action of *Women at the Thesmophoria*. Scholarly discussion of this vase has been primarily limited to the question of its identification as a travesty of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Yet regardless of the precise identification of the parody depicted, the vase offers further evidence for the correlation between feminization and failed disguise discussed in the earlier section on *Women at the Thesmophoria*. Furthermore, because this scene very likely represents a parody of tragedy, this disguise may implicate genre as well and thereby demonstrate again comedy's fondness for correlating tragic parody with failed female disguise.

The scene's contents are as follows. The central character on this vase wears an old man's bearded comic mask but a woman's ankle-length robe and a *himation* wrapped around his torso like a shawl. He carries a hydria, a vessel most commonly used for carrying water, but also sometimes used for funerary purposes. A phallus shows through his transparent drapery, and he holds another mask, which, though badly preserved, appears to be a female mask.⁶⁸ He is restrained by another comic figure on the right, a dark-haired bearded man in fur hat and animal-skin cape who carries two spears. At left is a third comic character, also wearing the mask of a bearded old man, but sporting a Phrygian hat and a decorated *himation*, and holding some kind of staff or scepter.

An identification of this scene as a comic parody of *Antigone* brought before Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone* remains the prevalent interpretation but has not won complete acceptance.⁶⁹ The hydria, while clearly crucial to the viewer's recognition of the scene, may be appropriate to *Antigone* but does not point exclusively to her.⁷⁰ Indeed, the hydria that the man on the St. Agata bell-krater carries may not be funerary at all; perhaps he has been caught doing that other quintessentially female task of going to fetch water.⁷¹ If he has gone (or will go) to the well or the fountain house with his water jar, our old man would resemble the Relative in *Women at the Thesmophoria* for his infiltration of a venue where women congregate.

Irrespective of whether this is "Antigone," two points emerge clearly from the St. Agata krater. First, the incomplete transgender disguise at the center of



22. St. Agata Antigone: A comic old man caught impersonating a woman. Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 380–370. St. Agata dei Goti I, Rainone–Mustilli Collection. Printed with permission of the owner.

Photograph courtesy of the A. D. Trendall Research Centre for Ancient Mediterranean Studies.

the scene engages the viewer in a consideration of role-playing. We see two sets of gendered costume – male mask and phallus, female mask and female dress – but they are mismatched. The actor is also holding one mask while wearing another, in an explicit sign that he has played or will play dual roles.⁷² In the visual arts of the fifth and fourth centuries, holding a mask is what actors do offstage, though they normally do so in a more relaxed and contemplative spirit than is granted the old man in the midst of action here. The focus on acting itself that is signified by the mask in hand, together with the female costume, makes it probable that the female role is one taken from tragic theater. As Taplin notes, the inclusion of the second mask makes the metatheatrical impact of this scene “bolder than any stroke which happens to be preserved among the extant plays,” because our surviving plays include no examples of a character either holding one mask while wearing another or changing masks onstage.⁷³ The layers of mimesis portrayed on this bell-krater are then quite complex. What we have is an imitation in painting of an imitation in comedy of an imitation in tragedy of an action. The mixed visual cues to

gender, together with the attention to role-playing and mimesis signified by the hand-held mask, correspond strikingly with the preoccupations of *Women at the Thesmophoria*.

The second crucial idea communicated by the painting and shared with *Women at the Thesmophoria* is that this man in female clothing is under some physical and emotional duress. His attempt to play a female role has been foiled. The guard physically grasps him by the shoulder with a wrenching gesture and further restrains him by stepping on his foot.⁷⁴ The beady-eyed guard looks hostile and the central old man looks anxious at best, even a bit crazed; the leftmost figure expresses benign surprise at this turn of events.⁷⁵ The posture of all three men suggests that the guard is going to haul off the old man to the viewer's right, against his will.⁷⁶ The cross-dresser's prospects do not appear good. If he is "Antigone," death awaits him. (One can imagine a hilarious rendition of Antigone's "O tomb, o bridal chamber" by this old man in drag.) Furthermore, the composition of the scene creates a framework of gender and power. The two side figures, unambiguously male, each hold signs of authority (scepter or staff on left and spears on right) that frame the scene; within that larger scaffold, the female mask and hydria further frame the central figure; at absolute center from left to right are the central character's phallus and bearded mask. These concentric signs of gender encircle a man who is trapped by his female accoutrements and has come under the physical control of other men. In sum, this old man in female clothing exemplifies the principle that has been proposed in the preceding discussion of *Women at the Thesmophoria*: the old man's attempt to play a female role is connected with lack of control over his own body, a fractured disguise, and tragic failure.

EXCHANGE, STATUS, AND THE POETS: *FROGS*

In *Frogs*, as in *Acharnians* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*, power relationships are transacted via costume, and a central character, this time Dionysus, spends a significant portion of the play in disguise. Yet the nature of the plot, the protagonist, and the overall mood that Aristophanes has created for *Frogs* produces a different kind of costume dynamics than we have seen so far. The stage action does not follow the same pattern as in the two other plays: we do not see Dionysus acquire the disguise onstage, nor does he get his disguise from a tragic poet, nor does his disguise involve the imitation of any specific tragic plot or character. Furthermore, *Frogs* presents no character as masterful as Dicaeopolis or as bungling as the Relative.⁷⁷ The agonistic elements that are so characteristic of Aristophanic comedy are postponed until the second half of the play, where words rather than costume are the focus. Correspondingly, the one-upmanship through sexual humiliation evidenced in other plays has a much-reduced role in *Frogs*, as does obscenity more generally.⁷⁸ While the

costume dynamics of *Women at the Thesmophoria* focus on the gender dichotomy, *Frogs* explores a whole set of other polarities in addition to gender: Heraclean versus Dionysian, brave versus cowardly, immortal versus mortal, and master versus slave. Dionysus begins the play purporting to be the superior in each of these oppositions, but his status is reduced through a series of costume exchanges. Thus, rather than presenting a fixed pattern in which one character possesses or lacks control of costume, the play offers a changing dynamic of costume control.⁷⁹ This emphasis on exchange complements the social commentary put forth in the parabasis. In addition, Dionysus's inability ultimately to use costume successfully calls into question his competence to handle the elements of drama more generally.⁸⁰

The beginning of *Frogs* presents two characters with significant accoutrements: Xanthias carries a long stick with baggage attached, and Dionysus carries a club and wears a lion skin.⁸¹ Before we consider Dionysus's Heracles disguise, we should dwell for a moment on the importance of the baggage, which has gone relatively unremarked by critics despite the emphasis it receives in the play.⁸² In the first thirty-four lines of *Frogs*, the baggage is the center of attention. From the beginning, it serves to characterize Xanthias as a typical comic slave, as he and Dionysus discuss which of the hackneyed slave-oppressed-by-heavy-baggage jokes he should tell (1–18). When Dionysus does not allow him to tell any of the conventional jokes, Xanthias asks (12–14), “Why did I have to carry this baggage, then, if I can’t do any of the things which Phrynicus is accustomed to do?”⁸³ Commentators on this passage have discussed Aristophanes' use of a kind of comic preterition, in which he claims to be above such low devices but exploits them to full advantage nevertheless.⁸⁴ At the same time, by focusing on the conventionality of the use of these props, the passage self-consciously calls attention to the baggage as comic signifier of slave status. Xanthias's repeated interjections about himself and the baggage while Dionysus speaks with Heracles (87–8, 107, 115, 160) prevent the baggage from fading from the viewer's mind, even as the focus shifts to Dionysus's attire.

In addition to calling attention to the luggage as marker of servitude, the opening lines of *Frogs* raise the question of who *is* carrying the bags, and who *should* carry them. Dionysus outwits Xanthias with a pseudosophistic argument that really the donkey is carrying the bags, because the donkey is carrying Xanthias; if Xanthias disagrees, perhaps he and the donkey should trade places (ἐν τῷ μέρει σὺ τὸν ὄνον ἀράμενος φέρε, 32). This dialogue further reduces the status of Xanthias by making him appear dimwitted and interchangeable with a beast of burden. Most interestingly, the idea of trading places – here between Xanthias and the donkey – prefigures the later exchanges to come between Xanthias and Dionysus, where it is god and slave who trade roles.⁸⁵ The question of who should carry the baggage recurs at 164–79, where Dionysus and Xanthias try to hire a corpse to haul the stuff to Hades. This emphasis on

Xanthias's stage properties prepares the audience for the important role the props are to play in the exchange of gear between Dionysus and Xanthias in the underworld. Ultimately, both the baggage and the Heracles costume, emphasized separately in the opening scenes, will converge in the exchange scene. The power dynamics between Dionysus and Xanthias are made visually manifest by their handling of both of these costume elements.

We turn now to the garb of Dionysus as he first appears onstage, clad in saffron robe and cothurni, topped by a lion skin and club. The ambiguity inherent in Dionysus's normal attire in myth and art is here replaced by a more simplistic dichotomy in which Dionysian and Heracleian elements stand in stark, incongruous opposition.⁸⁶ The juxtaposition of the Dionysian, feminine robe and the Heracleian, masculine overgarments is a model of comic incongruity, as Heracles' reaction shows when he sees Dionysus at his door (42–7):

- Ηρ. οὔτοι μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα δύναμαι μὴ γεῶν
καίτοι δάκνω γ' ἑμαυτόν· ἀλλ' ὅμως γεῶ.
Δι. ὦ δαιμόνιε, πρόσελθε· δέομαι γὰρ τί σου.
Ηρ. ἀλλ' οὐχ οἶός τ' εἶμ' ἀποσοβῆσαι τὸν γέλων
ὀρῶν λεοντῆν ἐπὶ κροκωτῶ κειμένην.
τίς ὁ νοῦς; τί κόθορνος καὶ ῥόπαλον ξυνηλθέτην;
- Her. By Demeter, I can't help laughing;
yet I'm biting my lip, but still I'm laughing.
Dion. Good sir, come here; for I need something from you.
Her. But I'm unable to quench my laughter
seeing the lion skin lying on top of the saffron robe.
What are you thinking? Why have the cothurnus and the club
joined together?

Despite Dionysus's belief that he has terrified Heracles (41), the effect has been the opposite. The connection between the comic and the incongruous is made clear by the emphasis on laughter (γεῶν 42, γεῶ 43, γέλων 45, all at line end) and the juxtaposition of λεοντῆν with κροκωτῶ in line 46 and κόθορνος with ῥόπαλον in 47. Heracles' reaction to this outfit recalls the Relative's reaction to Agathon's appearance at the beginning of *Women at the Thesmophoria*.⁸⁷ The gender confusion in Dionysus's outfit prompts mockery suggesting sexual relations with the pathic Cleisthenes (48, 57). Heracles' reaction to Dionysus gives us the first hint that the god's scheme may not develop as planned. Dionysus's laughably incongruous and so far unsuccessful costume sets him up for further failure. What is surprising is the terms on which he fails. The physical incongruity observed by Heracles points to a deeper mismatch of behavior and appearance, which will become the focus of the next section of the play.

Dionysus thinks that putting on the trappings of Heracles will make him act like Heracles. This idea had been mooted already in *Women at the*

Thesmophoria, when Agathon claimed a correspondence between his clothing and his mental state (ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν ἐσθῆθ' ἅμα γυνώμη φορῶ, *Thesm.* 148). That Dionysus's understanding of the effect of costume is similar to Agathon's is further underlined by the use of the word μίμησις in both *Thesm.* 156 and *Frogs* 109.⁸⁸ As Dionysus and Xanthias continue on their journey, however, it becomes increasingly clear that the Heracles costume does not in fact enhance Dionysus's bravery.⁸⁹ Immediately upon disembarking from Charon's boat, Dionysus demonstrates his cowardice by a very un-Heraclean soiling of his robe in the encounter with Empousa (285–308).⁹⁰ The importance of maintaining consistency between appearance and behavior is highlighted by the dialogue between Dionysus and Xanthias as they approach the doors of Hades in 460–3:

- Δι. ἄγε δὴ, τίνα τρόπον τὴν θύραν κόψω; τίνα;
 πῶς ἐνθάδ' ἄρα κόπτουσιν οὐπιχώριοι;
 Ζα. οὐ μὴ διατρίψεις, ἀλλὰ γεύσει τῆς θύρας,
 καθ' Ἡρακλέα τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὸ λῆμ' ἔχων.
 Dion. Come now, how should I knock on the door? How?
 How do the locals knock here?
 Xan. Stop wasting time, and have a try at the door,
 keeping your appearance and spirit like Heracles.

Xanthias suggests that the costume alone is not enough, but that Dionysus must also provide the appropriate attitude. This explicit emphasis on λῆμα marks a shift in the concept of successful disguise from one of merely fooling someone with one's appearance to one of matching behavior with appearance. In other words, the most important incongruity in Dionysus's character is no longer between divergent elements of his appearance, but between his appearance and his behavior. Thus, despite the fact that Dionysus is actually mistaken for Heracles by the doorkeeper, he clearly cannot live up to the Heracles costume in his demeanor. The violent reaction of the doorkeeper, and Dionysus's continued cowardice in the face of the doorkeeper's threats, illustrate the negative results of Dionysus's disguise.

The ensuing scenes of *Frogs* present an elaborate and very amusing process of attempting to get the σχῆμα and λῆμα correctly aligned. Regretting his Heraclean disguise, Dionysus trades costumes with Xanthias (494–502):

- Δι. ἴθι νυν, ἐπειδὴ ληματίας κἀνδρεῖος εἶ,
 σὺ μὲν γενοῦ γὰρ τὸ ρόπαλον τουτὶ λαβών
 καὶ τὴν λεοντῆν, εἴπερ ἀφοβόσπλαγχνος εἶ·
 ἐγὼ δ' ἔσομαι σοι σκευοφόρος ἐν τῷ μέρει.
 Ζα. φέρε δὴ ταχέως αὐτ'· οὐ γὰρ ἀλλὰ πειστέον·
 καὶ βλέπον εἰς τὸν Ἡρακλειοξανθίαν,
 εἰ δειλὸς ἔσομαι καὶ κατὰ σέ τὸ λῆμ' ἔχων.

- Δι. μὰ Δί', ἀλλ' ἀληθῶς οὐκ Μελίτης μαστιγίας.
φέρε νυν, ἐγὼ τὰ στρώματ' αἴρωμαι ταδί.
- Dion. Come now, since you are full of spirit and brave,
you become me, taking this club
and the lion skin, if you are really gutsy;
and I'll be your luggage carrier in turn.
- Xan. Bring them quickly; for I must obey.
And behold Heracles-Xanthias,
and see if I will be a coward, having an attitude like you.
- Dion. No you're not, by Zeus, but you're really the rascal from Melite
Come now, let me take up this luggage.

Line 500 (κατὰ σέ τὸ λῆμ' ἔχων) mockingly echoes 463 (καθ' Ἡρακλέα ... τὸ λῆμ' ἔχων), further stressed with ληματίας in 494. Here the baggage returns into play, for the trade involves not only the Heracles costume but the sack of bedclothes, mentioned explicitly at 497, 502, 521, 525, 596–7, and 627. In an unspoken pun, the two characters three times exchange σκεύη (baggage) for σκευή (Heracles costume).⁹¹ The baggage represents the inferior qualities of cowardice, slavery, and mortality; the Heracles getup connotes the superior characteristics of ἀνδρεία, master status, and divinity. The series of costume exchanges brings about a gradual lowering of Dionysus's status vis-à-vis Xanthias.⁹² Though he begins by giving orders to Xanthias as befits a master to a slave, Dionysus is soon pleading with Xanthias (579) and offering himself to be beaten (585). By the end of the exchanges, Xanthias-Heracles imperiously tells the doorman to torture his slave Dionysus (615–22). Yet although Dionysus is reduced in status, Xanthias never completely escapes his own low position.

Neither of the two, as it turns out, completely controls the Heracles costume – Dionysus because he is a wimp, and Xanthias because he is a slave – and neither is permitted to continue wearing it. Both Xanthias and Dionysus are ordered by the doorman to strip (ἀποδύεσθε δῆ, 641) so that he can beat them to test which is really the god and master. Dionysus and Xanthias thus join the ranks of Aristophanic characters who are humiliated through stripping. Dionysus's failure to maintain his Heracleian pretensions brings with it the loss of his masculine costume – the club and lion skin of Heracles – and a reduction to effeminate status, signified by the saffron gown. Like the Relative, then, he begins with masculine attributes but ends up clad in the symbol of emasculation. While the Relative's humiliation results from the addition of feminine apparel, Dionysus's failure is indicated by the removal of masculine accoutrements. His loss of status is further conveyed by the physical pain that was experienced only by Xanthias at the beginning of the play but now is shared by both characters. The doorkeeper's emphasis on the evenness of the punishment to be inflicted on each (636, 643), and

his inability to distinguish which is the god, indicate the new level of parity between Dionysus and Xanthias.

The physical equalization of Dionysus and Xanthias, enacted through their costume exchanges, stripping, and whipping, reinforces the emphasis elsewhere in *Frogs* on the leveling of social classes in Athens. Immediately after the whipping scene, the parabasis urges the Athenians to “equalize” its citizens (ἐξισῶσαι τοὺς πολίτας, 688) and makes reference to the liberation of slaves who had participated at Arginusae (693–9), a topic that had been mentioned explicitly twice already in the play (33–4, 190–2).⁹³ The sense of exchange among social classes is reinforced by the application of the term γεννάδας, “noble,” not only to Dionysus and Aeschylus (738, 997) but also to Xanthias at 179 and 640. Finally, the initiatory patterns that form a backdrop to the action of *Frogs* correspond well with this permeability of categories, since initiation itself is a temporarily status-rupturing experience that often involves a discarding of one’s earlier identity.⁹⁴ Dionysus does not, however, emerge from the experience with heightened status, as some critics have suggested.⁹⁵ Although Xanthias and Dionysus are nominally returned to their original status of slave and master respectively following the parabasis, Dionysus’s buffoonery only increases in the second half of the play.⁹⁶

On another level, the costume business in the first half of *Frogs* plays on the elements of drama so extensively and self-consciously that it serves as a fitting prelude to the explicit focus on theater in the second half of the play. Dionysus’s inability to maintain the Heracles disguise suggests an incompetence with costume and therefore with a fundamental aspect of dramatic technique. That costuming is an essential part of the dramatic productions is underlined in the agon between Aeschylus and Euripides, when attention turns to the issue of how each poet dresses his characters (1061–8).⁹⁷ Throughout the agon, Dionysus’s bewilderment when faced with the verbal dexterity of Aeschylus and Euripides parallels his failure to accomplish physical and behavioral mimesis in the first half of *Frogs*.⁹⁸ This ineptitude is particularly disconcerting when exhibited by the god of the theater, who, as Xanthias’s fellow slave says, should be “experienced with the art” of drama (τῆς τέχνης ἔμπειρος, 811). When contrasted with the costume-related dominance of Dicaeopolis, the ineffectiveness of Dionysus’s costume machinations in *Frogs* is all the more striking. As in the case of *Women at the Thesmophoria*, here, too, the costume-inept character is affiliated not with the comic poet but with tragic poetry.⁹⁹ Not even the god of theater, it seems, can match the theatrical prowess demonstrated by the comic poet-protagonist of *Acharnians*. The confidence that *Acharnians* expresses in the unambiguously masculine protagonist’s and comic poet’s power to control the dramatic production has given way in both *Women at the Thesmophoria* and *Frogs* to a less optimistic rendering of the ability of characters, now emasculated and associated with tragedy, to have their way with costume.

FIVE

ANIMAL COSTUMES AND CHORAL SPECTACLE

Consideration of comedy's choruses brings us to examine both the obscure origins and the most brilliant culmination of Old Comic costume. Visual material from the period before the institutionalization of comedy offers tantalizing glimpses of inventively costumed choral performances that preceded the development of Old Comedy as we know it. Creative, often nonhuman, choral costumes evidenced in pottery and in early comedies are part of the tradition of inventive costumes in which Aristophanes was working. Some further patterns of choral costuming in our extant plays and fragments set choral costume apart from the way actors' costumes are typically handled. These distinct features of choral costume result from a combination of pragmatic dramaturgical considerations; preexisting choral traditions; and, not least, the fact that the choral components of comedy, including the choral costumes, were supported by a different funding structure (the *choregia*) than were the actors. Those distinctions between choral and actors' costumes are elided in Aristophanes' *Birds*, the play in which costume achieves its most spectacular effects by fusing the animal-chorus tradition with the costume-control dynamics that we have seen expressed by successful Aristophanic protagonists.

VISUAL EVIDENCE FOR NONHUMAN CHORUSES

Approximately twenty Attic vases, clustered in date around the late sixth and early fifth centuries, depict groups of men in choral procession riding

on strange animals or wearing animal costumes, animal headdresses, or other strange features of dress.¹ Though there are a few outliers in date, much of this evidence dates to the twenty-year period from 500 to 480, the decades before and just after the formal establishment of comedy at the City Dionysia in 487/6. While most of this material is thus more than a half century removed in date from our first extant comedy, and the performance venue and genre depicted remain uncertain, nevertheless, the animal costumes and other strange choral attire on the Attic vases attest to an early fondness for inventive costumes that continues to find expression in *Wasps*, *Clouds*, and *Birds*, as well as countless lost plays. Examination of them shows that some key features of the Aristophanic chorus – visual spectacle, variety of costume, use of cloaks to conceal and selectively reveal interesting costumes, and the presence of bird costumes in particular – are not Aristophanes’ own invention but arise from a preexisting tradition of vividly costumed choral performance.²

This set of vases is somewhat heterogeneous in date, shape, and style, and some objects have weaker claim than others to belong to the group, but the scenes that they depict share some key features that have justified their treatment together. Table 1 lists the vases that have usually been included in this group and marks their key features. Many of the characteristics of the set appear on an early specimen, an Attic black-figure amphora from c. 540–530 known as the “Berlin Knights,” which depicts three men riding three other men who are dressed as horses (Figure 23).³ These vases typically show groups of performers in matching costume, as here; sometimes, as with the Berlin riders’ headgear, the costumes show individual variation in details, while still clearly constituting a matched set. The costumed group is usually accompanied by an *auletes*, as on the left on the Berlin Knights amphora, indicating that a musical performance is occurring and marking the group as a chorus. The costumes of the group members vary from vase to vase, but none of them are dressed in normal Athenian attire: they are dancers wearing animal head-dresses, men dressed as animals (horses, birds, bulls), riders of strange steeds (dolphin riders, ostrich riders, riders of men in horse costume), and stilt walkers; a subset of vases with dancing warriors is often included. Another exemplary member of the group is an Attic black-figure skyphos dated to the early decades of the fifth century.⁴ On one side (Figure 24), a row of helmeted and cloaked men ride dolphins toward an *auletes*; on the other side (Figure 25), richly costumed men ride ostriches in a similar line toward an *auletes* and another small figure. As on the Berlin Knights amphora, the movement of all of these costumed figures has a regularized, processional quality and a degree of synchronization.⁵ On another vase depicting armed dolphin riders, an Attic red-figure psykter of c. 510 (Figure 26), the phrase *ΕΠΙΔΕΛΦΙΝΟΣ* (on a dolphin) comes out of the mouth of each of the riders, indicating synchronized speech as well as movement.⁶ Taken together, the coordinated costumes, the

TABLE 1. *Vases with Unusually Costumed Choruses*

Vase	Date	Costume	Auletes	Cloaks
1. Black-figure Siana cup. Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum inv. 3356. Green 1985 no. 1	560	Two semi-choruses of 3 on each side of an auletes; some have feathers on their headgear; similar scene on reverse	X	
2. Black-figure hydria. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1988.11.3. Green 1985 no. 2	550	Four dancers with feathers or animal ears on headbands	X	
3. Black-figure amphora. Figure 23. Berlin, Staatliche Museen F 1697. Green 1985 no. 3	540–530	Three men wearing helmets with animal ears or other decoration, riding three men dressed as horses	X	
4. Black-figure amphora. Christchurch, N.Z., University of Canterbury 41/57. Green 1985 no. 4	530	Five stilt walkers		
5. Black-figure hydria. London, British Museum B 308. Green 1985 no. 5	520	Three dancers with bull heads, hoof-hands, and tails		
6. Red-figure psykter. Figure 26. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.281.69. Green 1985 no. 6	510	Six dolphin riders in full armor: helmets, breastplates, greaves, shields, and spears		
7. Black-figure Droop cup. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 1971.903. Green 1985 no. 7	510–500	Three spotted bull dancers, each holding the other's tail; two more bull dancers on the reverse		
8. Black-figure kylix. Los Angeles, Dechter Collection	500	One dolphin rider wearing helmet, greaves, and <i>chlamys</i>		X
9. Black-figure skyphos. Pulsano, Guarini Collection 48	500	Four dancers on each side with helmets, chitons, cloaks, and <i>krotala</i> (castanets)	X	X
10. Black-figure oinochoe. Figure 29. London, British Museum B 509. Green 1985 no. 8	500–490	Two bird dancers with wings, feathered tights, “feet,” and cockscombs	X	
11. Black-figure amphora. Brooklyn Museum 09.35. Green 1985 no. 9	490	Two pairs of helmeted men hold up decorated cloaks; two similar figures on reverse		X
12. Black-figure oinochoe. Figure 28. Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum L 344. Green 1985 no. 10	490	Three helmeted men dance with cloaks held up in left hand		X

13. Black-figure lekythos. Athens, Kerameikos 1486. Green 1985 no. 13	490–480	Two dolphin riders with helmets, breastplates, cloaks, and spears	X	X
14. Black-figure lekythos. Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale, 2816. Green 1985 no. 14	490–480	Two dolphin riders with helmets, breastplates, cloaks, and spears	X	X
15. Black-figure cup fragment. Basel, H. A. Cahn Collection 849. Green 1985 no. 15	490–480	One dolphin rider wearing helmet and cloak, carrying spears		X
16. Black-figure cup. Paris, Louvre CA 1924. Green 1985 no. 16	490–480	Eight dolphin riders wearing helmets and breastplates, carrying spears	X	
17. Black-figure skyphos. Figures 24, 25. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 20.18. Green 1985 no. 17	490–480	A: Six dolphin riders wearing helmets and cloaks B: Six ostrich riders wearing cloaks	X	X X
18. Black-figure skyphos. Thebes B.E. 64.342. Green 1985 no. 12	480	A: Six old men in cloaks with walking sticks B: Six old men on their heads, no cloaks	X	X
19. Black-figure amphora. Figure 27. Berlin, Staatliche Museen F 1830. Green 1985 no. 11	480	Two men in cock masks and ankle-length cloaks	X	X
20. Black-figure lekythos. London, British Museum B 658. Green 1985 no. 18	475–450	Three men wearing helmets, chitons, and greaves, each carrying a severed head and a sword		
21. Red-figure calyx-krater. Figure 30. Naples 205239 (formerly Malibu 82.AE.83)	440–430	Two bird-men wearing bird masks, wings, loincloths with tails and erect phalluses	X	
22. Red-figured pelike. Figure 31. Atlanta, Michael C. Carlos Museum 2008.4.1	425	One bird-man; costume identical to no. 21.	X	



23. Chorus of “knights” with piper. Attic black-figure amphora, c. 540–530. Detail. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen F 1697.

Photo Credit: bpk, Berlin/Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen/Karin Maerz/Art Resource, NY.

synchronized dance movements, and the presence of the finely attired *auletes* on these depictions suggest highly organized choral performance.

The *kind* of performance depicted remains uncertain. These vases have sometimes been called “*komos* vases,” but the name *komos* is somewhat misleading if it conjures images of spontaneous, drunken postsympotic shenanigans. What we see on this set of vases is not disorderly revelry but richly costumed, highly organized spectacle – *komos* in the sense of an officially organized procession.⁷ The amusing nature of some of the costumes and the presence of animal costumes in later comedy have led some scholars to see them variously as precomic, protocomic, or, for the later vases, plain Old Comic. Yet there is no indication of plot or solo actors; the scenes are purely choral.⁸ Current consensus, following the arguments of both Eric Csapo and Jeffrey Rusten, tends toward the view that these depictions relate to the dithyramb, a Dionysiac genre of choral performance.⁹ It is also possible, even likely, that not all the vases in this mixed group depict the same genre or performance venue. A wide range of venues for choral performances existed in the late sixth and early fifth centuries, so attributing all of these depictions to any one kind of performance may be misguided.¹⁰

How, then, can one assess the relationship of these vases to the costuming of the chorus in Old Comedy? We can begin with Csapo’s observation that early



24. Chorus of dolphin riders with piper. Attic black-figure skyphos, side A, c. 490–480. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. Gift of the heirs of Henry Adams, 20.18.
 Photograph © 2015 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



25. Chorus of ostrich riders with piper and small figure. Attic black-figure skyphos, side B, c. 490–480. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. Gift of the heirs of Henry Adams, 20.18.
 Photograph © 2015 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



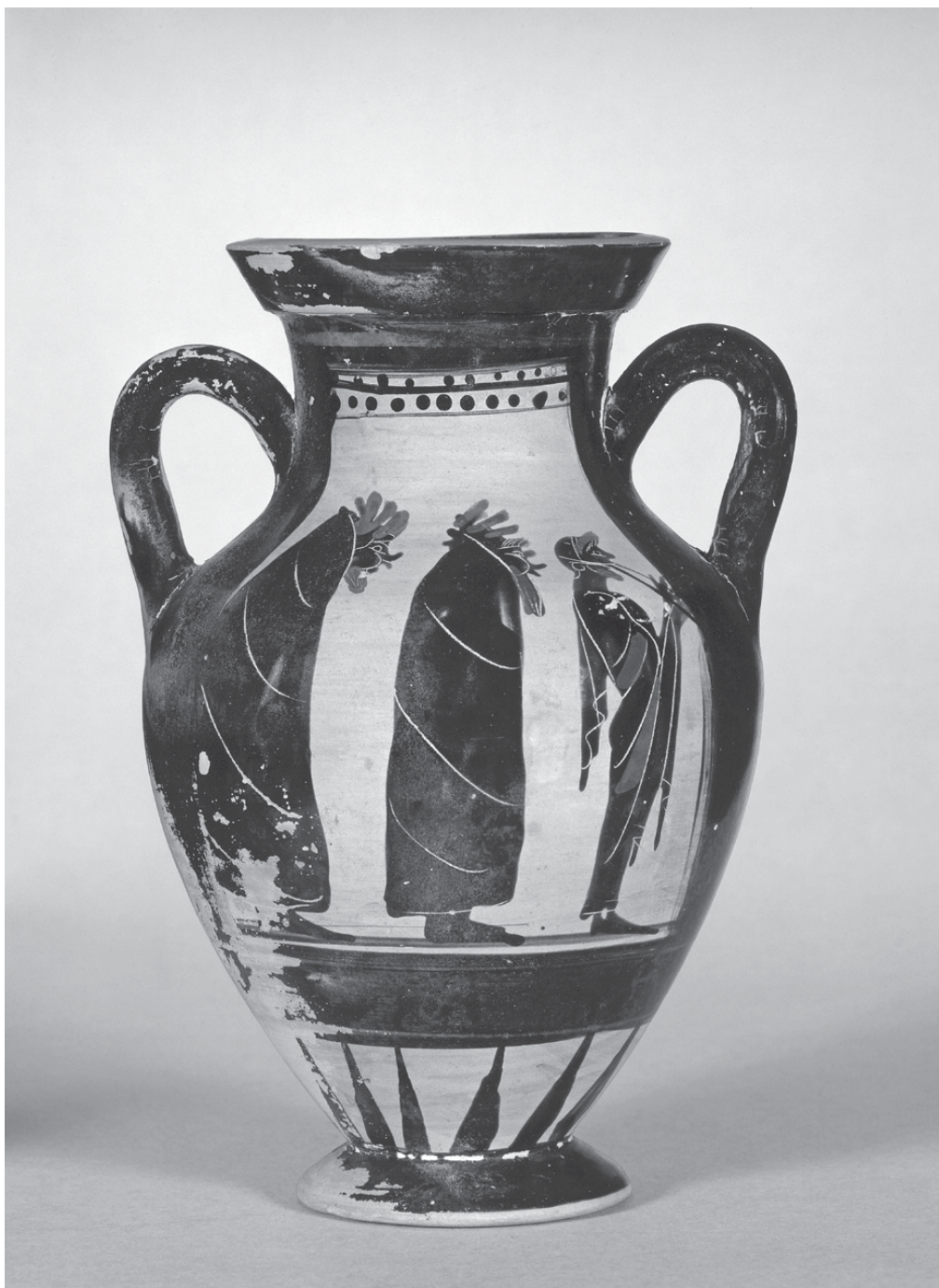
26. Circle of armed dolphin riders sing “on a dolphin.” Attic red-figure psykter, c. 510. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Norbert Schimmel Trust, 1989 (1989.281.69). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

Attic theatrical art is choregic – that is, it is designed to commemorate the contribution of the *choregos*, the wealthy individual responsible for recruiting, training, paying, feeding, and – most importantly for our purposes – outfitting the chorus, and who was listed along with the poet in the official victor lists of the Dionysia.¹¹ Csapo notes that choral scenes, because of their association with the wealth and high social status of the *choregos*, are more common on large, expensive vases intended for the aristocratic symposium; conversely, when individual actors are depicted later in the fifth century, they are on smaller, private, “down-market” vessels like choes. Thus the representation of a choral performance in early Attic theatrical art focuses on the particular elements that the *choregos* had funded, such as the dancers, their costumes, and the flute player. It may be significant that most of these vases showing elaborately costumed choruses appear in the period coinciding with the establishment of dithyrambic *choregiai* right after the reforms of Cleisthenes, and leading up to the establishment of comedy, with its own structure of *choregiai*, at the

Dionysia in 486/7. Csapo suggests that the building of the theater in Athens in the late sixth century prompted iconographic changes, such as a shift in focus from processional scenes to theatrical ones, including the first choregic tripods and depictions of tragic choruses.¹² In any case, the role of the *choregos* as sponsor of the chorus adds another agonistic, status-vying element to the dynamics of costume, both as represented on vases and as actually performed in the theater.¹³ The *choregos*, whether of dithyramb, tragedy, or comedy, has a self-promotional interest in making his chorus's costumes impressive.¹⁴ The grounds on which he competes for prestige include the visual spectacle of the chorus's appearance.¹⁵

The vases that we have considered so far confirm that the costume of early choruses could indeed be visually spectacular and highly entertaining. As Green notes, the stunning variety of these costumes forms a strong contrast with the fairly undifferentiated padded "komast" dancers of the seventh and sixth centuries, who look more or less the same from vase to vase.¹⁶ Whatever other ritualistic, sociological, or psychological effect the costumes may have had for the wearer, impressive visual impact is clearly an effect on the viewer of such outlandish spectacles as men walking on stilts, riding strange steeds, or dressed in animal garb. It is likely that the visual effect has its origin in the performance itself and not solely in the desire of the painter to enhance the stature of a particular *choregos* or to associate the pot with aristocratic extravagance. For while the precise details of the costume may be elided or embellished by the painter (as, e.g., on the dolphin riders, whose footless steeds seem problematic on land), the element of spectacle is inseparable from the very idea of, say, men riding ostriches or dressed as birds.

Aside from the elaborate pageantry that they depict, these vases also indicate that starting between 500 and 480, *himatia* or other cloaks could form an important part of the choral costume, even when combined with animal costumes.¹⁷ Ten of the choruses depicted on these vases are wearing cloaks of some kind (see Table 1). Two vases indicate some precedent for the choral stripping that we find sometimes in fifth-century comedy. First, the two men with bird masks who walk behind an *auletes* on a black-figure amphora from c. 480, known as the "Berlin Birds," are both tightly wrapped in *himatia* from chins to ankles (Figure 27).¹⁸ It is highly unlikely that they will remain so tightly wrapped throughout their performance, particularly if they plan to do any dancing; they are going to have to *do* something with those *himatia*. The most likely scenario is that this is their entry, and at some later point they will throw off those cloaks to reveal more of their bird costumes. Second, a black-figure skyphos dated to c. 480 shows on one side, six old men wearing full-length *himatia* and bearing torches, following an *auletes*; on the other side, six old men, without *himatia*, standing on their heads behind an *auletes*.¹⁹ The two scenes on this skyphos likely portray the same choral group at different



27. Two actors wearing bird masks and cloaks follow a piper. Attic black-figure amphora, c. 480. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen F 1830.

Photo Credit: bpk, Berlin/Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen/Johannes Laurentius/Art Resource, NY.



28. Three helmeted dancers gesture with cloaks. Attic black-figure oinochoe, c. 490. Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum L 344.

©Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg. Photo: P. Neckermann.

points in its performance, and if so, we have a “before” and “after” portrayal of doffing cloaks.²⁰ Further evidence for the manipulation of cloaks in choral performance appears on three black-figure vases from c. 500–490, on which helmeted men wearing *himatia* perform dances.²¹ In two of these, a black-figure oinochoe in Würzburg (Figure 28) and a black-figure amphora in Brooklyn, the dancers’ upraised hands are completely enveloped in their *himatia*, clutching them from the inside. Regardless of their precise generic relationship with comedy, these scenes show that early in the fifth century, choruses maneuvered their cloaks in a way that is depicted independently of any costume activity by an actor.

It may be significant, nevertheless, that the vases whose choral performers wear cloaks all cluster in the years surrounding the institution of comedy at the Dionysia (500–480). None of the mid- to late sixth-century vases (dancers with animal headdresses, knights, stilt walkers, bulls, early dolphin riders) have cloaks. The presence of *himatia* on the chorus members from 500 to 480

seems to be a sign of increased interest in the use of such garments during performances. The interest in the manipulation of costume in performance may explain why five of the “dolphin rider” vases from c. 500–480 depict riders who not only sport hoplite equipment (already odd enough) but also wear or carry cloaks.²² Barbara Kowalzig has argued that the armor of the dolphin riders evokes the hoplite phalanx and its emphasis on civic community; still unexplained, as far I know, is why these riders also wear full-length cloaks.²³ One possible explanation is that these dolphin riders will employ their cloaks as part of their performance.

A final observation to be made about early choral costumes is that dolphins and birds are especially common in the choruses of surviving vases, but birds have a much longer afterlife in Athenian comedy. There are seven vases, dating between 510 and 480, that depict group or solo dolphin riders.²⁴ Csapo has placed these dolphin riders in the context of other literary and iconographic representations of dolphins as dancers and especially in connection with the dithyramb; the connection between dolphins and dithyramb is further developed by Kowalzig.²⁵ The fact that there is no evidence for dolphin choruses in later comedy lends further weight to the idea that their affiliation was strongly with the dithyramb. But birds are a different matter, because they appear not only in these early vases but throughout the history of Old Comedy.²⁶ In addition to the ostrich riders, four vases portray one or more men dressed as birds, beginning in c. 500 and resurfacing in the last quarter of the fifth century. We have already seen the Berlin Birds amphora from c. 480 (Figure 27), which depicts two men with bird masks who wear tightly wrapped, full-length *himatia* and follow an *auletes*. From a decade or two earlier comes the “London Birds” black-figure oinochoe, which depicts two dancing men dressed in full-body bird costumes, including cockscombs and feathered wings, followed by an *auletes* (Figure 29).²⁷ Sometime after the middle of the fifth century (c. 430–440), bird-costumed dancers reappear on the red-figure calyx-krater formerly known as “Getty Birds” but better called the “Naples Birds” now that it has been repatriated to Italy (Figure 30).²⁸ This krater depicts two men in full-length ithyphallic bird costumes, each in a different crouched and gesturing posture on either side of a central *auletes*. Finally, the last among extant bird dancers appears on the “Atlanta bird” red-figure pelike (c. 425), which depicts a single dancing bird-man in costume nearly identical to that of the Naples bird-men, with an *auletes* on the reverse (Figure 31).²⁹ In addition, a late fifth-century jar shaped as a bird-person and a fourth-century terracotta figurine of a man dressed as a bird indicate persistent interest in bird costumes, as do fragments and titles of lost plays.³⁰ Particular attention is paid in all of these to the bird mask (cock’s crest, beak), feathers covering the whole body, and wings. In some cases, the bird-men share some features with satyrs, such as the snub face shape of the



29. Two bird-costumed men dance to the right of a piper. Attic black-figure oinochoe, c. 500–490. London, The British Museum, 1842,0728.787 (B 509).

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Berlin Birds (Figure 27) and the *perizomata* (loincloths) with attached erect phallus in the Naples and Atlanta birds (Figures 30 and 31).³¹

The bird costumes are of special interest, because, unlike other animal costumes, they resurface on vases in the later fifth century and thus have stirred scholarly interest in their possible connection to known comedies. The temptation to link these vases to a known play has proved strong but ultimately futile. When Green first published the Naples Birds vase in 1985 and dated it to c. 415, he supposed that it might be an illustration of Aristophanes' *Birds* of 414.³² It was duly put on the cover and served as the frontispiece for Sommerstein's 1987 edition of *Birds*. Then Taplin suggested (1987, followed by Csapo 1993) that the bird-men of the Naples vase represent not the *Birds* chorus but instead the dueling Logoi in the agon of *Clouds*, a pair whom the scholia to *Clouds* indicate were represented "in wicker baskets fighting like birds." Taplin retracted this suggestion in *Comic Angels*, conceding that the piper and matching outfits of the Naples Birds indicate a chorus.³³ The publication of the



30. Two men in ithyphallic bird costumes face off on either side of a piper. Attic red-figure calyx-krater, c. 440–430. Naples, Museo Nazionale 205239.

Photograph courtesy of Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli.



31. Costumed bird-dancer. Attic red-figure pelike, fifth century B.C.E. 2008.4.1. Carlos Collection of Ancient Art.

© Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University. Photo by Bruce M. White, 2008.

Atlanta Bird pelike further undermines the *Clouds*-agon theory, because while it clearly represents the same performance as the Naples Birds – the costume is nearly identical – it depicts only one bird (with piper on reverse), not in antagonistic relationship with anyone. Furthermore, the Naples krater has now had its date adjusted to at least 425, and even as early as 450.³⁴ At this point we must concede that it is extremely unlikely that either of these vases depicts an extant play by Aristophanes.

While they cannot be said to illustrate a play known to us, the Naples and Atlanta bird vases do point to a memorable performance – memorable for its costume in particular, which the painters have depicted in very great detail. Thus, when Aristophanes wrote and produced *Birds*, he was doing so against the background of at least one bird-play predecessor whose visual effect was famous enough to be put on multiple vases. The candidates are numerous. A play titled *Birds* by the pioneering comic writer Magnes, known to be active in the 470s, was still well known enough that Aristophanes could reference

it in *Knights* in 424, at about the same time as the Naples and Atlanta vases. Another comic poet, Cantharus, active in the last quarter of the fifth century, is credited with a *Tereus* and a *Nightingales*. As we will see from our study of *Birds*, Sophocles' *Tereus* may have involved a bird costume, perhaps representing the metamorphosis of Tereus at the end of the play; there was also a tragic *Tereus* by the playwright Philocles. And the scholiast's remark that the Logoi of *Clouds* were dressed as fighting cocks, even if it is misguided, reminds us that any comedy can contain costumes whose inventiveness is not even hinted at by the play's title. In this milieu, competitive one-upmanship on the part of both poet and *choregos* must have played a significant role in the costuming of a spectacular chorus such as that of *Birds*.

CHORAL COSTUME IN ATTIC COMEDY

As the preceding account of bird costumes indicates, inventive choruses continued to be a staple of Attic comedy through the fifth and early fourth centuries. Play titles may not give the whole picture, but in addition to the bird-related plays already cited, such titles as *Fruit Flies* (Magnes), *Ant-Men* (Cantharus), *Nanny Goats* (Eupolis), *Fish* (Archippus), and *Storks* (Aristophanes) indicate continued interest in animal choruses, while *Cheirons* (Cratinus), *Demes*, *Cities* (both Eupolis), *Merchant Ships*, and *Islands* (both Aristophanes) suggest other kinds of nonhuman choral spectacle.³⁵ At the same time, plays with more mundane human choruses (farmers, women, old men, commanders, members of various ethnic groups) presumably required less imaginative costumes but could draw on ethnic costume or grotesque padding for comic effect.³⁶ The surviving plays of Aristophanes present a wide spectrum of choral costume. The degree of choral costume extravagance ranges from the jaw-dropping (*Birds* above all) to the workaday (*Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Wealth*). It would be interesting to know whether the wealth of the *choregos* was in any way matched to the choral costume in advance: was a play like *Birds*, whose chorus demanded an especially exotic costume, viewed favorably by or intentionally matched with a deep-pocketed *choregos*?³⁷ The degree to which the costume of the chorus is integrated with the play's themes, action, and other costume dynamics varies greatly, from the highly integrated use of choral costume that we saw in *Lysistrata* and will see even further in *Birds*, to other plays such as *Knights* and *Clouds* where the treatment of choral costume is somewhat detached from the remainder of the play. One wonders, again, what effect the particular relationship between the poet and *choregos* had on the degree of integration of choral costume into any given play.

Several patterns in the way choral costume is staged differentiate it from the costume dynamics performed by the actors. First, the playwright often

directs extended attention to the spectacle of the choral costume in the chorus's entry song, a key visual moment in a play. This is an extension of the dynamic by which an anomalous costume receives explicit attention (as noted in [Chapter 1](#)), but in the case of the chorus there is a specific, anticipated moment in the play's structure when the visual impact and corroborating verbal signal of the chorus's arrival occur. In *Clouds*, for example, the entrance of the chorus members is anticipated with great suspense: first called by Socrates at line 265, they raise curiosity about their appearance when they speak of revealing their dewy nature (ἀρθῶμεν φανεραὶ δροσερὰν φύσιν εὐάγητον, 276–7); but by 322 Strepsiades is still not able to see them, for he asks to see them φανερώς (clearly). Socrates has to point to them three times, directing not only Strepsiades' but also the audience's attention toward the direction of their entrance (323–6).³⁸ The cloud chorus's appearance receives further attention beginning at line 340, when Strepsiades asks why its members look like mortal women and observes that these “clouds” have noses (344)!

Some plays give even further attention to choral costume in the parodos by commenting on the appearance of each individual chorus member. The fragments of Eupolis's *Cities* (frs. 245, 246, and 247) indicate that in that play's parodos each female representation of a city is identified and her costume connected with a feature of the city she represents.³⁹ The following exchange occurs in fr. 245: (A) “This one's Tenus.” (B) “You have many scorpions and informers.”⁴⁰ Another chorus member is identified as Chios (fr. 246): “This one's Chios, a lovely city; for she sends you long ships and men whenever you ask and she obeys well, just like an obedient horse.”⁴¹ Fragment 247 completes the survey of chorus members: “But where's the last one? Here she is, Cyzicus, the city full of gold staters.”⁴² A fragment of Aristophanes' *Islands* (fr. 403) indicates that in that play as well, individual chorus members may have been pointed out as they entered, presumably with the same purpose of identification.⁴³ *Birds* offers a similar parodos, an extended sequence (268–304) in which each chorus member is differentiated by costume and named upon entrance. In both of these cases, as in *Clouds*, the playwright tries to make sure the audience “gets” the significance of the choral costume, even at the level of individual chorus member.

The principle of dazzling visual impact at the entrance of the chorus and the competitive milieu of Old Comic performance can guide the interpretation of choral entries in plays in which textual evidence gives few direct clues. Such is the case in both *Knights* and *Frogs*, two plays in which the meager references to choral costume belie potentially eye-catching animal choruses. In each case, it is difficult to fathom that the playwright-producer would not take full advantage of the opportunity to include animal costumes when appropriate to the chorus.⁴⁴ In *Knights*, the text leaves it uncertain whether the chorus

of cavalrymen enters mounted on some kind of pretend “horses” or simply on foot. Nothing about the costume of the *Knights* chorus is ever directly mentioned in the play. Yet, when the chorus enters at 242, it performs cavalry movements, and during the parabasis it extols the virtue of the horses (595–610). The Berlin *Knights* amphora (Figure 23), although it predates *Knights* by more than a century, offers a highly entertaining choral spectacle of men dressed as horses, ridden by other men. Stone has suggested that in *Knights*, half the chorus members are dressed as riders and the other half as horses.⁴⁵ This costuming would add an extra layer of meaning and humor to the chorus’s praise of the (self-evidently human) “horses,” who are described anthropomorphically as leaping aboard ships “manfully” (ἀνδρικῶς, 599) and taking oars “just like we mortals” (ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς οἱ βροτοί, 601).⁴⁶ A similar fusion of theriomorphism and anthropomorphism occurs in the chorus of *Wasps*.

The eponymous chorus of *Frogs*, so memorable for its vocalizations, poses similar uncertainties about its visual manifestation. The text of *Frogs* never mentions this chorus’s costume – though it does mention the ragged clothing of the second chorus, the Eleusinian initiates, at lines 404–12 – nor does it necessitate direct physical contact between frog chorus and actors. As Dionysus rows his way across the marsh to the underworld, his spirited interaction with the frogs and their κοᾶξ (ribbit) takes the form of verbal banter, unlike the often physically violent confrontation between comic protagonists and choruses in other plays. While the auditory component takes precedence here, that need not mean that the frogs were invisible to the audience, as suggested by a scholium (Σ^{VE} 209) and followed by some scholars.⁴⁷ In what has become the definitive discussion of this scene, C. W. Marshall suggests an effective staging in which the frogs are visible to the audience but not to Dionysus.⁴⁸ As with Strepsiades’ myopic inability to spot the entrance of the *Clouds* chorus, the audience could enjoy superiority over the protagonist, with the added enhancement of lively frog hopping by the chorus members. This staging, together with the emphasis on their song, would explain why there is no mention of the frogs’ costume in their give-and-take with Dionysus; furthermore, the frogs’ identity as frogs would be obvious enough that their costumes would not need to be explained in the manner of the clouds, islands, or individuated birds. In any case, frog costumes offer too much comic potential to squander completely. Given the competitive one-upmanship of comic production and the tradition of animal choruses, a fifth-century production of this play without visible frog-costumes would be a disappointing (and unprecedented) surprise.⁴⁹

Another dynamic that differentiates the use of choral costume from actors’ costume is the frequency with which choruses voluntarily put aside part of their costumes. As we noted in Chapter 1, voluntary stripping is quite rare in Aristophanes, except for the chorus. In five of the surviving plays, the chorus

members remove some part of their costume. At *Acharnians* 627 the chorus members remove their *tribones* as they prepare to enter upon the anapests of the parabasis; at *Peace* 729–31, the chorus hands over unnecessary equipment to the stage hands before the parabasis; at *Wasps* 408, the chorus members hand their *himatia* to attendants; at *Lysistrata* 615, 637, 662, and 686, the chorus strips incrementally but completely; and at *Women at the Thesmophoria* 655–6, the chorus members hitch up their *chitons* and remove their *himatia* as they prepare to search for the Relative.⁵⁰

On the basis of these passages, some early scholars suggested that this so-called parabolic stripping is an indication that chorus members remove their costumes and even masks in order to step out of character in the parabasis. Zielinski proposed that this gesture preserved a vestige of an earlier structure of comedy, in which the parabasis was the epilogue of the play and the chorus members disrobed at that point to return to their citizen status.⁵¹ Even Hubbard, who completely rejects the notion that the parabasis is a fossilized remnant of ritual origins, views the disrobing of the chorus in the parabasis as “no doubt metaphorical for the dropping of dramatic illusion and the poet’s symbolic ‘unmasking’ in the following anapests” and suggests that (at least in *Acharnians*) the coryphaeus removes his mask for the anapests.⁵² The central problem with the “parabolic stripping” hypothesis is that, of the five passages in which the chorus lays aside part of its costume, only two (*Acharnians* and *Peace*) actually occur immediately before the parabasis. The other three examples of choral costume jettisoning occur during or immediately before the agon, not the parabasis. Furthermore, the chorus often speaks directly about its costume and identity in the parabasis; as Hubbard notes, comic fragments suggest that even in the anapests, the chorus engaged in its own self-presentation as often as it did the presentation of the poet.⁵³ It would be erroneous to draw the conclusion, on the basis of two passages, that the chorus always removes part of its costume for the parabasis, or that all choral stripping is related to that parabolic dynamic; nor is there any evidence for removal of the chorus members’ masks.

Another possibility, suggested by both Stone and Ketterer, is that the need for a freer range of movement for dancing or other vigorous activity motivates the removal of costume by the chorus.⁵⁴ Unrestricted movement is clearly a goal in several of the extant cases of choral disrobing (*Wasps*, *Lysistrata*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, and possibly *Acharnians*).⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this free-range-of-motion explanation is not completely satisfactory either. In *Peace* and *Acharnians*, the chorus members have already been engaged in quite vigorous activity even before they set aside their costume-pieces. Furthermore, characters, too, engage in all kinds of energetic activity (often engaged with the chorus itself), and for these occasions the actors do not voluntarily strip or formally announce their intention to do so, as the chorus does. We still have not yet reached an explanation for why the costume-related actions of the comic

chorus appear to be governed by a set of implicit principles different from the actions of the characters.

It may be helpful to recall that, as the depictions of choruses on the *komos* vases demonstrate, visual spectacle is one of the fundamental principles underlying the use of choral comic costume.⁵⁶ That principle of “visual interest” may govern such choral costume manipulation as the removal of costume pieces. After the initial choral spectacle of the *parodos*, interest needs to be maintained. One way to maintain that visual appeal is through removal of *himatia* and other items of apparel to reveal previously unseen parts of the costume, or conversely concealment to build suspense. We have seen evidence from vase painting that such handling of cloaks may have been part of the repertoire of choral movements from the beginning of the fifth century. The suspense and visual interest created when the choral costume is initially covered by a *himation* and then removed appears to have been operative on the skyphos in Thebes depicting old men dancing with and without their cloaks and on the Berlin Birds amphora (Figure 27), as well as in *Wasps*.⁵⁷ A further practical consideration suggests why choral stripping is voluntary, undertaken by the chorus itself rather than controlled by the protagonist: it would be cumbersome if not impossible for one character to strip the costumes of twenty-four chorus members. These considerations help explain why the use of choral costume can operate somewhat autonomously, outside of the costume-control dynamics that hold sway among the characters.

A final difference between choral costume and that of the actors is that choral costume, particularly when it is exotic, offers the playwright opportunity to play with the duality between the thing being represented and the one who is representing it, to a much greater degree than with nonchoral actors. Choruses that represent animals, inanimate objects, or abstractions stand at the far end of the illusionistic continuum, because the gap between what the chorus represents and the actual human chorus members who embody this representation is so great. No matter what they represent, the chorus members are always on some level inescapably human; no costume can ever be fully theriomorphic. The bird-men of the London, Naples, and Atlanta vases (Figures 29–31), for example, clearly have human legs, and those on the London oinochoe have beards.⁵⁸ The playwright has several strategies that capitalize on this dynamic. As we have seen in the *Clouds* *parodos*, one option is to call attention to that gap between what the costume is supposed to represent and what it actually looks like (the *Clouds* have noses!) and turn it profitably into a joke. In the *parodos* of Eupolis’s *Cities* cited earlier, the idea that the chorus members are simultaneously cities and women (though the chorus members themselves are male) lends much of the humor.

A fuller exploitation of the duality between human chorus member and animal costume can be seen in *Wasps*, where both the human and the

animal qualities of the wasp chorus are kept operative throughout the play.⁵⁹ Before the chorus members appear onstage, Bdelycleon warns about their stingers: ἔχουσι γὰρ καὶ κέντρον ἐκ τῆς ὀσφύος / ὀξύτατον, ᾧ κεντοῦσι (for they even have a stinger coming out from their rump, extremely sharp, with which they prick, 225–6). But when the chorus members appear a few lines later, this strongly marked component of their costume is not visible; their stingers are initially covered by their *himatia*. Instead, the jurors at entry are poor old men, whose age is contrasted with the boys who accompany them.⁶⁰ The poet takes this opportunity, before the stingers are revealed, to dwell on the dichotomy of youth and old age that is a central theme in the play, while also introducing some costume-related suspense. Finally the anticipated stingers come out: at 405–7 the chorus members announce their intention to bring out their stingers, and at 408–9 they ask the boys to take the *himatia* and run to Cleon. The stingers receive even more verbal attention in the ensuing lines: “Heracles, they do have stingers! Don’t you see them, master?” says Xanthias at 420; “draw your stingers,” the chorus exhorts itself at 423; “I’m scared looking at their stingers!” says Xanthias at 427. The coexistence of human and animal qualities embodied in the costumed chorus members continues in the parabasis. First the chorus members mention their old-man attributes, pointing to their white hair at 1064–5 (αἶδ’... τρίχες) and perhaps their phalluses at 1062–3.⁶¹ But then they turn their attention to their wasplike appearance (wasp waist, stinger, and rump, 1071–5), before returning to the anthropomorphic (ἄνδρικότατον, 1077) and fusing it again with the wasplike (“nothing manlier than an Attic wasp” at 1090).⁶² By maintaining this dual animal-human nature of the chorus, Aristophanes can profitably employ the chorus toward two central ideas of the play: the theme of old age and youth, on the one hand, and the animal fable theme, on the other.⁶³

BEAKS AND WINGS: *BIRDS*

One of the stunning features of *Birds* is the unparalleled proliferation of animal costumes throughout the play.⁶⁴ Each member of the twenty-four-person chorus is differentiated as a specific bird; four other mute bird-costumed characters precede the appearance of the chorus; the *aulos* player is represented by a bird-costumed nightingale; the human protagonists magically acquire wings; several other characters appear at least partially dressed as birds; and three other characters seek a pair of wings from Peisetaerus.⁶⁵ *Birds* presents the reverse dynamic from that of choral stripping or weakened choral identity: rather than the chorus losing its costume or identity, virtually everyone else in the play wants to gain those items of costume (wings in particular) and the powers that come with them. This extension

of theriomorphic attributes from the chorus to most of the characters who appear onstage bridges the gap between choral costume and actors' costume and thereby reinforces the rich integration of choral and mimetic elements achieved by this comedy.⁶⁶

The several representations of bird-costumed performers on Attic vases that we examined in this first section of this chapter indicate the apparent fascination that bird costumes held for an Athenian audience. These vases offer evidence for the range of avian attributes that Aristophanes may have had at his disposal for the production of *Birds*. As depicted in vase painting, these pieces of costume include crests or combs on top of the actor's head, beaks attached to full-face masks, wings fastened to the actor's shoulders or strapped to the arms, other body plumage indicated by markings on the bodysuit, and spurs on the heels or knees.⁶⁷ Each of these pieces of bird costume receives some attention somewhere in *Birds*. But while crests and spurs prompt only a few fleeting jokes, the beaks and wings worn by various characters serve repeatedly as loci of costume activity in the first and second half of the play respectively.

A focus on these concrete matters of costume and its handling will bring the interpretation of *Birds* down to earth and will challenge the commonly espoused view that this is "fundamentally a play about the power of language."⁶⁸ The play's self-conscious use of costume provides both a counterpoint and a complement to the grandiose visions propounded by its words.⁶⁹ The wings and beaks that fill the play function not merely as metaphors but as tangible objects onstage that reify the play's imagery, propel the plot's development, and signal the status of characters. Through manipulation of bird costumes, the human protagonists move from initial fear to eventual mastery over birds' beaks, one of the very elements of costume that mark bird characters as such. When Peisetaerus becomes distributor of first cloaks and then wings, he demonstrates his mastery over the human and bird worlds in a way that parallels and then exceeds the costume dominance enacted by other Aristophanic protagonists.

Beaks and Spits

The section of *Birds* that precedes the parabasis presents a sustained crescendo of bird-related visual effects, from the two birds carried by Peisetaerus and Euelpides, to the hoopoe's servant, the hoopoe himself, the four birds that precede the chorus, and finally the stunning display of the chorus itself. Throughout this part of the play, characters repeatedly direct the audience's attention to the birds' beaks, which most often signify danger and hostility. As we will see, the humans' response to the birds' costumes reflects their overall evolution from initial fear to ultimate mastery over the birds. Thus, the physical

handling of costumes corroborates the development of the plot and manifests the status of its characters.

From the outset of *Birds*, beaks cause alarm. On their journey to find the man-bird Tereus the hoopoe, Peisetaerus and Euelpides have brought along two guide birds that offer the first signs that beaks can be dangerous. “All they know how to do is bite,” complains Peisetaerus (τῷ δ’ οὐκ ἄρ’ ἦσθην οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν δάκνειν, 19). Later Euelpides fears that his bird is going to bite his fingers off (26). Whether these first two birds in the play are represented onstage by real birds, dummies, or even pantomime, the humans are at the mercy of the birds’ beaks, led by their gaping significations (20, 51) and frightened of their pecks.⁷⁰ This focus on the bills of the birds prepares us for the entrance of Tereus’s servant, whose huge beak causes great alarm to the humans: “Apollo Averter, the gaping!” (Ἀπολλὼν ἀποτρόπαιε, τοῦ χασμήματος, 61), exclaims Peisetaerus when the servant bird appears at the “door” to Tereus’s thicket. The ensuing dialogue – a stock comic routine about fear-induced defecation – centers on their terrified reaction to the oversized beak of the servant.⁷¹ While the characters are soiling their garments in fear, the audience is laughing at them for their cowardly reaction to this piece of costume.

The servant is just a prelude to the appearance of Tereus himself. The servant’s frightening appearance and the macabre story of Tereus, the savage Thracian rapist, glossectomist, and unwitting cannibal, create the expectation that the master may be even more fearsome than his servant was to the Athenian travelers. In a typical comic *para prosdokian*, Aristophanes subverts this apprehensive expectation with a ridiculous costume on Tereus (92–106):

- Επ. ἄνοιγε τὴν ὕλην, ἵν’ ἐξέλθω ποτέ.
 Πε. ὦ Ἡράκλεις, τουτὶ τί ποτ’ ἐστὶ θηρίον;
 τίς ἡ πτέρωσις; τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς τριλοφίας;
 Επ. τίνες εἰσὶ μ’ οἱ ζητοῦντες;
 Πε. οἱ δώδεκα θεοὶ
 εἷξασιν ἐπιτριψαί σε.
 Επ. μῶν με σκώπτετον
 ὁρῶντε τὴν πτέρωσιν; ἢ γάρ, ὦ ξένοι,
 ἄνθρωπος.
 Πε. οὐ σοῦ καταγελῶμεν.
 Επ. ἀλλὰ τοῦ;
 Πε. τὸ ράμφος ἡμῖν σου γέλοιον φαίνεται.
 Επ. τοιαῦτα μέντοι Σοφοκλέης λυμαίνεται
 ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαισιν ἐμὲ τὸν Τηρέα.
 Πε. Τηρεὺς γὰρ εἶ σύ; πότερον ὄρνις ἢ ταῶς;
 Επ. ὄρνις ἔγωγε.
 Πε. κᾶτὰ σοὶ ποῦ τὰ πτερά;
 Επ. ἐξερρύηκε.
 Πε. πότερον ὑπὸ νόσου τινός;

- Επ. οὐκ, ἀλλὰ τὸν χειμῶνα πάντα τῶρνεα
πτερορρυεῖ κατ' αὐθις ἕτερα φύομεν.
- Ter. Open the wood, so that I can at last come out.
- Peis. Heracles, what in the world is this creature?
What is the plumage? What the manner of triple crest?
- Ter. Who are the ones seeking me?
- Peis. The twelve gods
seem to have worn you down.
- Ter. You're not mocking me,
seeing my plumage, are you? For I used to be, strangers,
a human being.
- Peis. It's not you we're laughing at.
- Ter. At what, then?
- Peis. Your curved beak seems ridiculous to us.
- Ter. Such indeed is the outrage Sophocles inflicts on
me in his tragedies, me, Tereus.
- Peis. So you are Tereus? Are you a bird or a peacock?
- Ter. I'm a bird.
- Peis. Then where are your wings?
- Ter. They've fallen off.
- Peis. Because of some disease?
- Ter. No, but during the winter all the birds
shed their feathers and then we grow them back again.

As with the servant, the bird costume of Tereus, too, causes an outburst at his entrance; yet contrary to the appearance of the servant, whose beak was the only element explicitly noted, here multiple parts of Tereus's costume earn remarks. It appears that Tereus is sporting a large triple-crested headpiece (94), a curved beak (99), and a bodysuit with circular markings (and perhaps a few feathers) to indicate plumage (94, 102).⁷² However, he is clearly lacking wings, πτερὰ (103–6).⁷³

The response of Peisetaerus to Tereus shows an entirely more sophisticated attitude toward costume than did the humans' reaction to the servant just a few moments earlier. They are not frightened by the costume, but instead evaluate its verisimilitude and laugh at its flaws: the apparently bedraggled plumage, the oversized crest, the ridiculous beak. This movement from fear to laughter is underlined with σκώπτετον in 96, καταγελῶμεν in 98, and γέλοιον in 99.⁷⁴ Finally Peisetaerus asks (103), "Where are your wings?" There is no good ornithological reason for a hoopoe to be missing wings, as Tereus's wholly unsatisfying explanation (104–6) reveals. Rather, the lack of wings points to inadequacy of costume.⁷⁵ A parallel can be found in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, when the sexually ambiguous appearance of the tragic poet Agathon elicits questions about his missing phallus, cloak, and shoes (*Thesm.* 142–3). Just as those items are the signs of the comic male, so wings are a requisite part of a

bird costume. As Peisetaerus observes, the transformation of Tereus into a bird is patently and ridiculously incomplete.

The inadequate hoopoe costume of Tereus is associated with tragedy and particularly with a Sophoclean rendition of the myth of Tereus. As commentators have noted, the vocabulary and meter of this passage are tragic: the abstract noun πτέρωσις for plumage (94, 97) appears only here in *Birds*, as does τριλοφία for crest; ῥάμφος, “beak” (99), appears only here in Aristophanes. The series of anastrophic questions (93–5) heightens the paratragedy, which culminates in specific reference to Sophocles’ *Tereus* (100–1).⁷⁶ The use of tragic diction to react to the costume, paired with the direct reference to Sophocles’ tragedies, raises the question of the extent to which the physical appearance of Aristophanes’ Tereus is indebted to Sophocles’ *Tereus*. Gregory Dobrov has proposed that at the conclusion of Sophocles’ play, some kind of tableau depicting “subtle tokens of the metamorphosis” of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus is rolled out on the *ekkyklema*, and that the appearance of Tereus in the *Birds* scene recalls that metamorphosis.⁷⁷ This view has been rejected by more recent commentators on the *Tereus* fragments, such as Sommerstein and Fitzpatrick, who nevertheless offer no alternative explanation for what aspect of Sophocles’ play this passage from *Birds* could be parodying, if not a visibly transformed Tereus.⁷⁸

We should not be so quick to dismiss the possibility of at least a partial physical transformation of Tereus in Sophocles, though there is no need for (or evidence for) the use of the *ekkyklema* that Dobrov suggests. A scholium to *Birds* 100 says, ἐν γὰρ τῷ Τηρεΐ Σοφοκλῆς ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν ἀπωρνιθωμένον καὶ τὴν Πρόκνην. ἐν ᾧ ἔσκωψε πολλὰ τὸν Τηρέα (For in the *Tereus* Sophocles rendered him and Procne into birds; therefore he [Aristophanes] mocked Tereus a lot). The one fragment from *Tereus* that bears on this question also states that Tereus has been turned into a bird. This fragment (fr. 581.1–3) is generally agreed to be spoken by a *deus ex machina* near the end of *Tereus*:⁷⁹

τοῦτον δ’ ἐπόπτῃν ἔποπα τῶν αὐτοῦ κακῶν
πεποικίλωκε κάποδηλώσας ἔχει
θρασὺν πετραῖον ὄρνιν ἐν παντευχίᾳ

and him [Tereus] as a hoopoe, viewer of his own evils,
he [the god] has dappled and has revealed as
a bold rock-loving bird in full armor.

The perfect tense of πεποικίλωκε (he has dappled) and the periphrastic perfect κάποδηλώσας ἔχει (he has revealed) in line 2 indicate that the transformation into a hoopoe is a completed action, not a divine foretelling of what will happen.⁸⁰ If Tereus, Procne, and Philomela have already fled the stage and are never to be seen again after their transformation, as Sommerstein and Fitzpatrick seem to imply, to whom does this *deus ex machina* speak?⁸¹ I think rather that

at least Tereus is present at the end of Sophocles' play, with some change in appearance. Perhaps he wears a dappled cloak and a new mask with a birdlike military crest and beak. A significantly altered mask at play's end has precedent in *Oedipus the King*, where the protagonist wears a blinded mask after his cataclysmic downfall. Animal headgear has tragic precedent in the appearance of Io in *Prometheus Bound*, where Io calls herself "horned, as you see" (κερᾶστις δ'ὥς ὁρᾶτε, *PV* 674). Sophocles may not have gone so far as to give Tereus feathers – hence, the questions about absent plumage posed by the interlocutors in *Birds*. Yet, in any case, the presence of an animal costume in a tragic context would be an opportunity too good for our comic poet to pass up.⁸²

Three aspects of this fragment of *Tereus* recur in *Birds* 92–106 and therefore suggest an allusion to this particular moment in the Sophocles play. The military gear implied in ἐν παντευχίᾳ ("in full armor," Soph. fr. 581.3) is referenced by *Birds*, τριλοφίας ("triple crest," line 94). The dappled plumage indicated by πεποικίλωκε ("he has dappled," Soph. fr. 581.2) is implied in the peacock comparison at *Birds* 102, which makes it clear that Tereus's costume is spotted. Most interesting are the references to seasonal changes of plumage in both plays (Soph. fr. 581.4–8, *Birds* 103–6). The *Tereus* fragment predicts that the plumage of Tereus-hoopoe will be that of a hawk in spring but dappled (as a hoopoe) again in fall.⁸³ In *Birds*, this becomes Tereus's nonsense about molting in winter.

There is a brief echo of the Tereus scene about two hundred lines later in *Birds*, when another wingless hoopoe associated with tragedy appears. Tereus explains that "this one is the son of Philocles' hoopoe" (οὔτοσί μὲν ἔστι Φιλοκλέους ἐξ ἔποπος, 281–2), a reference to the tragic poet Philocles' tetralogy on the Tereus myth. "How he's lost his plumage!" exclaims Euelpides at 284, using the same verb, πεπορρουεῖ, that had been used of Tereus's plumage (106). This bird, explains Tereus, has had his feathers plucked out by prosecutors and females (286). Thus, both representatives of tragic performances – Tereus and this second hoopoe – lack wings.⁸⁴ The absence of wings on Tereus and the second hoopoe is symptomatic of the winglessness that characterizes the entire first section of *Birds*.⁸⁵ Indeed, in this part of the play it is only the members of the chorus – the "real" birds within the world of the play – that claim wings (e.g., 296).

The arrival of the chorus of birds is the most elaborate spectacle in all extant Old Comedy. It is introduced with suspenseful buildup of the type we encountered in *Clouds*: first the birds are called by Tereus (227–62), then there is a brief delay, noted by the characters (263–66); then, instead of the chorus proper, four special birds – a flamingo, a Mede, a hoopoe, and a "gobbler" – arrive one at a time and take position onstage (268–93);⁸⁶ finally, the entire chorus is spotted in the entry passage (294–6), and each of the twenty-four birds is named as it enters (297–304).⁸⁷ The costumes of three of

the four preliminary birds draw comment: the crimson color of the flamingo (272–3), the missing plumage of the hoopoe (284–6), and the “dyed” (βαπτρός, 287) appearance of the “gobbler.” Of the twenty-four chorus members, Dunbar notes, “at least twelve of the birds represented have one eye-catching colour or more, and at least six of these ... would each provide, if at all accurately portrayed, a striking spectacle of bright and contrasting colours.”⁸⁸ Indeed, a display to make a *choregos* proud.

Immediately upon the entrance of the members of the chorus, attention focuses on their beaks. The beaked masks that received such attention at the entrance of Tereus and his servant continue to represent danger and opposition, now in even greater intensity. Peisetaerus takes the birds’ gaping beaks as evidence of their threatening attitude (307–8), and the chorus leader confirms his fear, urging the birds to attack the two humans and make them “give fodder for our beaks” (δοῦναι ῥύγχει φορβάν, 348). The coryphaeus commands the birds to pluck and bite the humans (352) and to lower their beaks into an attack position (364).⁸⁹ Here again, then, the bird mask itself plays a major role in the encounter between humans and birds. Faced with these costumes used as weapons, Peisetaerus counters with props turned into armaments.⁹⁰ He devises an ad hoc conversion of cooking implements into military equipment, ordering Euelpides to pick up first a pot, then a skewer, then a saucer or bowl to ward off the birds’ attack (356–61). These unheroic utensils make appropriately comic weapons and are also particularly threatening to the birds, who are normally boiled in them or roasted on them.

In this mock-arming scene and the following lines, Peisetaerus takes charge of the handling of props, barking commands at 383, 386–92, 448–50, and 656–7. While his actions earn him admiring comparison to a *strategos* in this quasi-military engagement (362–3), his control of stage action also enhances the nascent image of Peisetaerus as a director, or *didaskalos*.⁹¹ First, the hoopoe ascribes to the humans the ability to teach the chorus (διδάξοντες 372; cf. διδάξειαν 373); then Peisetaerus himself instructs the birds in the next several hundred lines (δίδασκον 438, διδάσκω 550). The function of *didaskalos* is performed not only by Peisetaerus’s words, but also by his direction of stage properties. His imperious instructions to Euelpides and later to the slaves (656–7) regarding the disposition of props mark a stage mastery that complements the persuasive words with which he wins over the chorus. With these orders Peisetaerus begins to resemble the costume-dominant Dicaeopolis, who gives costume-related commands to both Lamachus and Euripides in *Acharnians*.

One final encounter with a bird’s beaked mask extends the developments that we have seen so far and further demonstrates the humans’ emerging dominance over the birds. As Tereus is about to lead Peisetaerus and Euelpides inside to give them wings, the chorus requests that the nightingale Procne be

sent out so that they can “sport” with her. In one of the most intriguing scenes in Aristophanes, Procne appears onstage, to the leering delight of the humans (667–74):

- Πε. ὦ Ζεῦ πολυτίμηθ', ὡς καλὸν τοῦρνίθιον,
ὡς δ' ἀπαλόν, ὡς δὲ λευκόν.
- Ευ. ἄρα γ' οἶσθ' ὅτι
ἐγὼ διαμηρίζοιμ' ἂν αὐτὴν ἡδέως;
- Πε. ὅσον δ' ἔχει τὸν χρυσόν, ὥσπερ παρθένος.
- Ευ. ἐγὼ μὲν αὐτὴν κἂν φιλήσαι μοι δοκῶ.
- Πε. ἀλλ', ὦ κακόδαιμον, ρύγχος ὀβελίσκοιν ἔχει.
- Ευ. ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ῥὸν νῆ Δι' ἀπολέψαντα χρῆ
ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὸ λέμμα κᾶθ' οὔτω φιλεῖν.
- Peis. Much-honored Zeus, how pretty the birdy is,
how tender, and how fair!
- Eu. Do you know that
I would gladly get between her thighs?
- Peis. And how much gold she has, just like a maiden!
- Eu. I think I'd like to give her a kiss.
- Peis. But she has a beak of two skewers, you wretch!
- Eu. But by Zeus, it's necessary to peel, like an egg,
the shell from her head and then, like this, kiss her.

The ogling remarks of the humans and the absence of any reference to feathers or wings indicate that Procne is at least partially costumed as a human female, except for a bird mask and beak.⁹² Procne's headgear and her relationship with the production's official *auletes* have been the subject of considerable discussion, with some scholars suggesting that Procne is wearing a *phorbeia* (the leather harness that holds the double pipes in place) and has two pipes rather than a beak protruding from her mouth.⁹³ But as I have argued in detail elsewhere, Euelpides' comparison of something on Procne's head to an eggshell (ὥσπερ ῥὸν, 673) indicates that Procne is wearing a full-face bird mask that includes a beak.⁹⁴ This egg-shaped, beaked mask rules out the possibility that she is played by the *auletes* or that she herself sports a *phorbeia* instead of beak.

As in the earlier scenes of the play, a beak again represents danger, but here only fleetingly, as Peisetaerus warns Euelpides about Procne's sharp “beak of two skewers.” The word ὀβελίσκοιν recalls the recently resolved conflict with the chorus, as the two formerly opposing weapons, beak and spit, are now merged into one spitlike beak.⁹⁵ Significantly, Euelpides states his intention to peel away that mask and beak and to give Procne a kiss (673–4).⁹⁶ Thus, the humans advance one step beyond their reaction to Tereus: then they mocked a flawed costume, but here one of them physically removes a piece of the costume itself.⁹⁷ In an apt closing to the first portion of the play, the fear initially

created by the servant's beak five hundred lines earlier has been replaced by a nonchalant, illusion-breaking flip of the mask.

The removal of Procne's mask combines several standard Aristophanic costume techniques, in the context of the beaks motif in the first half of *Birds*, to arrive at an action that is unprecedented. First, it is clearly a version of the Aristophanic ogling-and-fondling scene, in which a leering male character makes physical contact with an attractive female (discussed in [Chapter 2](#)). As is typical in these scenes, the display or the contact is facilitated by removal of some part of the female's costume. At the same time, the stripping of Procne's mask right before the parabasis may serve as a substitute for choral stripping, which is otherwise absent from *Birds*, as the birds themselves maintain their avian persona throughout and do not remove any part of their costume. If the bird Procne is a stand-in for the bird chorus, it is significant that the handling of bird costume has been transferred from the birds' control (as would be standard in choral stripping) to the human characters' control. The degree of that control as demonstrated in the Procne scene is unprecedented: nowhere else in Aristophanes does one character remove the mask of another. The opening scenes of *Birds* thus present a progression from fear at costume (of Tereus's servant) to laughter at costume (of Tereus) to physical manipulation of costume (of Procne), and from defensive handling of stage objects (warding off the chorus) to offensive stripping of costume (assaulting Procne). The costume business first with Tereus and then with Procne frames and reinforces the verbal prowess for which Peisetaerus is best known. The mastery he has gained over the birds is manifested by the power he ultimately exerts over their costumes.

By stripping Procne's mask, Euelpides signals the departure of beaks as a theme. Now that the birds have been won over by the humans, beaks disappear as a threat and even as a notable presence onstage. In the more than one thousand lines that follow the parabasis, the beak of an onstage character is never again mentioned. The only two occurrences of the word *ρύγχος* after Procne are both, tellingly, instrumental datives in the messenger's report of the birds' industrious accomplishments on the new city's behalf (1138, 1155).⁹⁸ Now that the birds' initial hostility has been replaced by cooperation, the beaks recede into the background, and the play takes flight.

Cloaks and Wings

Just as the physical removal of Procne's mask marks the end of the beaks theme, here the addition of wings to the humans' costumes marks the onset of the wing mania, and the provision of costume pieces in general, that will fill the rest of the play.⁹⁹ The addition of theriomorphic costume pieces to other actors beyond the chorus is a remarkable extension of the animal chorus and is not known elsewhere outside of *Birds*. This addition of costume, symmetrical

(ὠκυπτέροις, 803), distinctly recall the humans' reaction to Tereus's appearance (cf. καταγελῶμεν 98, γέλοιοι 99). Here again, Peisetaerus and Euelpides evaluate costume and find it ridiculous, but this time the costume is their own.¹⁰³ In fact, the hoopoe has served as a precursor for Peisetaerus and Euelpides in several ways. Tereus joined the society of the birds before they did; Tereus taught the birds Greek, and then Peisetaerus instructed them in his own plan; Tereus's costume evoked laughter for its lack of verisimilitude, and now their costumes prompt self-mockery. In costume, as in each of these other ways, Peisetaerus follows but then surpasses Tereus. The costume of Peisetaerus may look ridiculous, but he does at least sport wings. While it is Tereus who has equipped our protagonists with wings, eventually Peisetaerus himself takes over as the distributor of wings.

In round one of this play's costume distributions, Peisetaerus dispenses not wings but cloaks. First a poet with a thin cloak appears, spouting Pindaric verses in honor of the newly formed city. He hints that a reward for his efforts would be appropriate, so Peisetaerus orders a mute extra, presumably a slave, to strip off his leather jerkin and give it to the poet (933–5):¹⁰⁴

οὗτος, σὺ μέντοι σπολάδα καὶ χιτῶν' ἔχεις,
ἀπόδυθι καὶ δὸς τῷ ποιητῇ τῷ σοφῷ.
ἔχε τήν σπολάδα· πάντως δέ μοι ῥιγῶν δοκεῖς.

[to the slave]

You there, you have a jerkin and tunic;
strip it off and give it to the wise poet.

[to the poet]

Have the jerkin; you certainly seem to be frigid.

Not completely satisfied, the poet makes a thinly veiled hint for the tunic as well, and Peisetaerus again complies, commanding the slave to take off the *chiton* and ordering the poet to take this gift and leave (946–8). Hardly has Peisetaerus been rid of that nuisance when an oracle monger enters with yet another plea for clothing, this time through an oracular pronouncement that the first prophet who comes to the city should receive a clean *himation* and new sandals (972–3). Peisetaerus loses patience more quickly this time and beats off the oracle monger with a scroll.

Thus the costume-dispenser role of Peisetaerus is demonstrated first with tried-and-true, stock comic business using standard parts of the actor's costume. As we have seen in [Chapter 3](#), the audience could reasonably expect that in any given play, someone would lose his shirt, or gain a new one. Indeed, *Birds*, like most Aristophanic plays, is rife with references to clothing. There are stolen cloaks (Euelpides' tale of a losing his at 492–8, along with mention of the clothing thief Orestes at 712–15 and 1490–3); threadbare cloaks (the aforementioned poet and oracle monger, plus the sycophant at 1416–17); an

improperly draped cloak (the Triballian at 1567–73); and a symbolic upgrade in clothing (Peisetaerus receiving the bridegroom's robe at 1693). Thus, while the ornithological outfits in *Birds* represent a heightened level of costume ingenuity, the play still incorporates the more stock clothing routines as well, creating parallels between human attire and the avian accoutrements.

Here in *Birds*, the interlopers' pleas for clothing serve several functions. First of all, the encounter with the poet shows Peisetaerus further displaying his control over costume in *Birds*. In the course of a few lines he effects the stripping of one character (the slave) and the clothing of another (the poet). The divestiture of the slave parallels the stripping of Procne's beak. Here, however, the focus has shifted to costume per se rather than props or masks, and henceforth Peisetaerus will be primarily engaged in adding, not removing, pieces of costume.

Second, by staging a poet begging for garments, Aristophanes parodies a trope that goes back at least to Hipponax, who depicted himself as a beggar demanding a cloak, sandals, and a whole host of mundane items. Other literary predecessors include Odysseus's elaborate hinting for a cloak from Eumaeus and Pindar's convoluted attempts to solicit patronage.¹⁰⁵ Aristophanes thus deploys typical comic stage business in order to enact a literary motif. If, as some have suggested, Peisetaerus in some way acts also as a comic poet, then the contrast with the other poets is all the more pointed. While the poets of other genres must beg for clothing and patronage (cf. the second poet who enters at *Birds* 1373), this comic *didaskalos* controls the distribution of costume.¹⁰⁶

The provision of cloaks in these scenes serves as a preliminary to round two, the distribution of wings. The transition from cloaks back to wings is effected during the second parabasis, where birds of the chorus note that they don't need cloaks (1088–90): "Oh happy tribe of winged birds, who do not wrap themselves in cloaks in winter!"¹⁰⁷ They wrap themselves, of course, in wings instead. The repeatedly drawn parallels between cloaks and bird plumage in the succeeding episodes facilitate the extension of bird attributes from the chorus to other characters and help make it possible for wings to be treated as costume pieces that can be distributed like any other item of apparel.

When Peisetaerus receives a report that all things avian are now the rage among humans and that he should expect ten thousand people coming for wings, he begins to prepare the stage for their arrival. In so doing, he draws additional attention to the wings as pieces of costume and furthers his own position as stage manager.¹⁰⁸ First he commands a servant to hurry up and bring the wings (1309–11): "You, go as fast as possible and fill up baskets and hampers with wings, and let Manes bring the wings to me outside."¹⁰⁹ Repeated commands to his servant (1317, 1323–4, 1327, 1335–6) to hurry up with the wings cast additional emphasis on them as stage properties. The chorus even suggests (1330–4) that the wings should be sorted into categories by bird type.

In the ensuing second wave of interlopers, three wing-seekers petition Peisetaerus. Focus remains on the physical objects that Peisetaerus bestows and on the parallels between wings and human clothing. First enters a young man seeking wings so that, like a bird, he can beat up his father. After some conversation, Peisetaerus gives him three items from his stash (1364–7): “Take this wing and this spur in the other hand, believe that you have this, a rooster’s, as your crest, and stand guard, campaign, earn your keep.”¹¹⁰ The three deictics make it clear that Peisetaerus is handing the young man three physical objects that are bird costume analogous to military equipment (or conversely, military equipment analogous to bird costume).¹¹¹ Next enters Cinesias, a dithyrambic poet whose petition for wings makes him a double of the earlier poet who angled for a cloak. When Cinesias boasts of his role as a sought-after *kyklio-didaskalos* (dithyrambic poet), Peisetaerus asks him whether he wants to stay and instruct (διδάσκειν) “a chorus of flying birds” (χορὸν πετομένων ὀρνέων, 1406) – a nice metatheatrical reference to the bird-costumed chorus of this very play and a reminder of Peisetaerus’s own instruction of that chorus earlier in the play. Cinesias does not receive wings; instead, Peisetaerus uses the props to “wing-whirl” him around.

The set of associations among poets, cloaks, and wings reaches its grand finale in Peisetaerus’s encounter with a man who turns out to be an informer. This character appears at 1410, wearing a patchy cloak that recalls the “punctured cloak” of the first poet at line 915. This newest interloper sings a ditty, adapted from Alcaeus, about birds with patterned plumage. Peisetaerus interprets the words as applying to the tattered cloak of the singer himself (1416): “I think he’s singing that tune about his *himation*.” Here again, then, is an explicitly drawn parallel between human outerwear and bird plumage. We might think that this man is yet another shivering poet, until he states that he is an informer who wants wings for speedier travel among cities (1422–5).

The encounter with the informer includes an exchange that has often been taken as emblematic of the unique power of language in *Birds* (1436–9):

- | | | |
|-------|--|-------------------|
| Συ. | ὦ δαιμόνιε, μὴ νουθέτει μ', ἀλλὰ πτέρου. | |
| Πε. | νῦν τοι λέγων πτερῶ σε. | |
| Συ. | | καὶ πῶς ἂν λόγοις |
| | ἄνδρα πτερώσειας σύ; | |
| Πε. | | πάντες τοι λόγοις |
| | ἀναπτεροῦνται. | |
| In. | Dear sir, don't counsel me, wing me. | |
| Peis. | But I am winging you by speaking. | |
| In. | | And how by words |
| | could you wing a man? | |
| Peis. | | Everyone by words |
| | is made winged. | |

Having asserted that language creates wingedness, Peisetaerus offers a number of examples: one man complains that his son has been set aflutter for driving chariots, another that his son has been set aflutter for tragedy (1440–5).¹¹² In the eyes of many critics, the emphasis on λόγοι in this passage confirms the priority given to persuasive speech in this play. Cedric Whitman has called these lines “almost a statement of the theme of the *Birds*.”¹¹³ Yet this scene, when followed to its conclusion, in fact demonstrates the failure of language to persuade. After Peisetaerus states his intention to convert the informer to a better cause with good words (χρηστοῖς λόγοις, 1449), the informer refuses (ἀλλ’ οὐ βούλομαι, 1450) and reiterates his demand for literal wings (ταχέσι καὶ κούφοις πτεροῖς / ἰέρακος ἢ κερχνηδος, “the swift and light wings of a hawk or kestrel,” 1453). Peisetaerus gives up on verbal persuasion and pulls from his basket some “wings” that are really whips. The outcome of this scene shows that despite what Peisetaerus says, words alone are not always sufficient on the comic stage and had better be backed up with control of the physical properties of the stage as well.

If costume mastery accompanies verbal dexterity in the case of Peisetaerus, a converse correlation should be true as well. And, indeed, a bungled costume and garbled language are united in one character as the play draws to a close. A delegation from the gods, comprised of Poseidon, Heracles, and a Triballian, arrives to negotiate with Peisetaerus. The Triballian’s barbarity is manifest from the moment he appears, since he has draped his *himation* the wrong way. Poseidon stops to fuss with the cloak (1567–72): “Hey, what are you doing? You have it folded on the left like that? Why don’t you shift it to the right, like this? ... Keep still! Arrgh!”¹¹⁴ The Triballian’s disheveled costume, and Poseidon’s apparent inability to straighten it, signal the disarray of the delegation before it has even begun to negotiate. When the Triballian is finally called upon to speak, his nonsensical Greek (1615, 1628–9, 1678–9) expresses verbally what his costume faux pas had already indicated. In contrast, Peisetaerus blithely cooks up some rebel birds and dupes the lunk-headed Heracles with a trick. In a final escalation of status, Peisetaerus receives the scepter of Zeus and calls for a bridegroom’s robe to signal his marriage to Basilea (1693).¹¹⁵

As we have seen, then, Peisetaerus’s ability to manipulate costumes emerges in tandem with his verbal prowess in the first portion of *Birds*. After the parabasis, Peisetaerus continues to direct the action onstage, particularly as a dispenser of costume pieces. Any high-flying linguistic dexterity is correlated with physical mastery of stage properties. Aristophanic heroes are never just speakers of words, but also very active doers of deeds. The comic protagonist who most resembles Peisetaerus in this regard is Dicaeopolis, who also uses both costume and verbal persuasion to win over a hostile chorus. Yet in some respects Peisetaerus surpasses the stage mastery of even the hero of *Acharnians*. While both characters acquire their costumes from another party (Peisetaerus

from Tereus, Dicaeopolis from Euripides), Peisetaerus goes on to become himself a distributor of costumes. Furthermore, his appropriation of bird costume spans the divide between human and animal and, on a theatrical level, that between theriomorphic chorus and anthropomorphic characters. The acquisition of Zeus's scepter and the bridegroom's robe even brings him into the divine realm. This more extensive reach of his costume manipulation befits the more cosmic ambition of Peisetaerus and *Birds* itself.

Matching our protagonist's expansive reach is the brilliant ambition of the play's production, which takes a century-old tradition of animal-costumed choruses and removes its limits, so that animal costumes become mixed with human attire and pervade the play. In *Birds*, we see all of the stock elements of costume manipulation examined in earlier chapters – ogling and fondling of female characters, manipulation of cloaks, engagement with tragic costume, the protagonist as *didaskalos* and controller of costume – expressed through bird-costume analogues that have been appropriated from the world of animal choruses. When set in the context of the animal-costume vases with which this chapter began – scenes in which the chorus was the sole focus, and no actors were present – the individual supremacy of Peisetaerus over the chorus and his appropriation of its theriomorphic attributes is a remarkable development in the history of comic costume.

SIX

CONCLUSION

The exceptionally vibrant performance of costume on the Greek comic stage of the fifth and early fourth centuries resulted from a confluence of factors that never converged in quite the same way again. To be sure, recent work on drama in the broader Greek world cautions us against Athenian exceptionalism.¹ For example, there appears to have been a robust dramatic tradition in Sicily beginning with the comedies of Epicharmus at the start of the fifth century and attested by fourth-century dramatic vases, but we have no extant Sicilian plays with which to form a considered comparison with the use of costume in Athenian drama. What we can say is that a constellation of factors led to a marvelously imaginative and complex use of costume on the fifth- and early fourth-century Athenian stage. A brief review of those contributing circumstances will set the context for a look across to tragedy and ahead to later Greek and Roman comedy.

From archaic Greece, Old Comedy inherited two traditions that encouraged meaningful use of costume. First, the epic tradition placed significant emphasis on the manipulation of armor and other physical objects as signals of a character's status. As we saw in [Chapter 1](#), much of the agonistic dynamic of costume in Old Comedy can be paralleled in the contestation and symbolism of equipment in Homeric epic. Furthermore, Odysseus in particular provided a model of a hero who dealt successfully in duplicity and disguise.

Second, Old Comedy benefited from a rich choral culture rooted in archaic Greece but still lively in the fifth century and incorporated into Athenian

democratic institutions. The establishment of an institutional structure for the sponsorship of choruses (the *choregia*) at Athens ensured that comedy would benefit from the financial support that a wealthy and prestige-seeking *choregos* could offer for the very expensive costuming and training of the chorus. The animal masquerades and other outlandish costumes, evidenced on vases as early as the middle of the sixth century, set a model for an enlivening, sometimes spectacular choral element that Old Comedy gamely appropriated.

Furthermore, a cultural milieu in which dramatic performances were a shared and prominent part of public life encouraged comedy to make meaningful reference, both visual and verbal, to the costume of other dramas, with which it could assume some audience familiarity. As plays like *Acharnians* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*, as well as individual scenes like the Tereus scene in *Birds* demonstrate, the multifaceted intertextuality of comedy was enhanced to a significant degree by visual references to the costumes seen in other plays. The position of drama as the premier literary form of the fifth century spurred comedy to engage with questions of illusion raised by the theatrical experience itself. Furthermore, the agonistic spirit and structure of dramatic competition at Athens further motivated costume one-upmanship, by the poet and the *choregos*, as well as by characters within the play's internal dynamic.

All of these influences were shared by fifth-century tragedy, which employed its own contested costumes, choral spectacle, epic-style symbolic armor, and metatheatrical disguising scenes.² But some other key elements, seized opportunistically by Old Comedy as it developed the distinguishing features of its genre, set apart its use of costume from that of tragedy. First of all, the free reign given to the comic poet's imagination, the wild inventiveness prized by the genre, and the total absence of the constraints of naturalistic illusion encouraged creative use of costume. A genre in which riding a dung-beetle to heaven is an acceptable plot premise, and in which novelty is the overriding imperative, will offer strong incentive for ever-new costume spectacle. Likewise, a genre in which it is permissible, even preferable, if your wasps do not really look like wasps, your clouds have noses, and your women look like men, can imagine its costumes utterly unconcerned about the potential for its illusion to fail.

Balancing this fantastic element in comic costuming was its appropriation of material from Athenian daily life. As we have seen, the versatile nature of standard Greek clothing, especially the all-purpose and easily removed *himation*, contributed to the vigorous costume dynamics of comic production by allowing for easy manipulation on stage. Contrast the long formal robes of tragic actors, with their fitted sleeves. Tragic costumes could certainly carry symbolic meaning (such as the funereal clothing of Heracles' family in Euripides' *Heracles*), but the very structure of tragic garments also inhibited the movements of its characters and prevented easy manipulation of costume.³ Comedy,

in addition to its more maneuverable dress, could also exploit meanings of costume from everyday Athenian experience, such as the unpleasant realities of clothing theft or the fact that Athenians put on their shoes to go participate in the life of the *polis*. Taken together, the fantastic element, the everyday material, and the intertextual (or inter-textile) connections of comic costume in the fifth century add up to a very extended vocabulary of costumes that parallels the wide span of Old Comedy's verbal range.

Tragedy and comedy also differed in the way they reacted to the preoccupation with physical ideals that permeated fifth-century Greek culture. This male athletic ideal, so ubiquitous in classical art, animated comic costume by providing the perfect foil for the grotesquerie of the padded, phallus-sporting comic body and the disruptive behavior that it represented. Fifth-century Greece provided a unique cultural setting for staging the male comic body: the fact that the artificial phallus was openly displayed in ritual (such as the phallic processions that some sources link with the origins of comedy), and that male nudity was customary in art and athletics, meant that the comic phallus could be viewed at all in public without the censorship or embarrassment that might accompany it in other cultures; yet at the same time, because of its contrast with the athletic ideal, the grotesque comic body with its exaggerated phallus nevertheless had a meaningful antiheroic force. The comic body as depicted in art, with its multilayered artificiality, contrasted not only in shape but also in its very layering with the athletic male nude. Tragedy certainly posed its own challenges to the heroic ideal, by means of the wounded bodies and unrestrained grief that it staged.⁴ But this relationship with physical ideals is not represented visibly by costume per se in tragedy, whereas in comedy the body costume became an iconic symbol of the genre.

As comedy developed in new directions in the fourth century, movements toward naturalism and character typing became the driving forces of its costuming choices. (I use the word "naturalism" with the awareness that masked, costumed drama is never truly naturalistic.) This did not happen all at once, immediately after Aristophanes. In the period of Middle Comedy, mythological burlesques were popular, offering continued opportunity for exaggerated costumes. Costumes as depicted on vases and terracotta figurines continue to be consistently grotesque through the middle of the century. But by the late fourth century, the emergence of the domestic love plot had significant consequences for comic costume. The young men and women now at the center of the plots could no longer be played as grotesques, nor would fantastic choruses be consonant with domestic plots focused on young lovers. The increased prominence of *hetaira* roles and young female love interests in particular challenged comedy to develop new ways of representing women on stage. At the same time, the rise of realism in art lessened the productive tension between the comic grotesque and the athletic ideal. The archaeological record offers no

more scenes of stage nudity after the middle of the fourth century; young men begin to wear long cloaks that cover their genitalia; the phallus, now usually visible only on old men and slave characters, shrinks to normal size.⁵

An increased focus on character types by the late fourth century manifested itself especially in comic masks but also in other aspects of costume that could readily indicate a character's age or social class. A detailed typology of masks was bequeathed to us by the lexicographer Pollux (4.143–54) in the second century C.E., and the plentiful archaeological evidence for New Comic masks has continued to be collected and systematized, most thoroughly in the latest edition of *Monuments of New Comedy* by Webster, Green, and Seeberg.⁶ Given this abundance of evidence for the mask and its importance for character typing, most interpretation of costuming in Greek New Comedy has focused on the mask.⁷ Yet clothing, too, could also be used to indicate character type. Pollux 4.118–20 lists different garments and colors appropriate to each character type: he says, for example, that young men wear purple clothing, but parasites wear black or gray (καὶ πορφυρᾷ δ'ἑσθήτι χρώνται οἱ νεανίσκοι, οἱ δὲ παράσιτοι μελαίνῃ ἢ φαίᾳ, 4.119). Because the surviving material evidence does not correspond with the color guidelines listed by Pollux, his information may be of limited application; but distinctions of dress certainly mark such categories as free citizens, slaves, soldiers, cooks, and prostitutes.⁸ In addition to the way that the material or color of the costume could indicate character type, interpretations by Green and Hughes of terracotta figurines and vase paintings demonstrate that the handling of clothing could also reveal important aspects of character. For example, the way she holds her *himation* distinguishes a modest citizen woman, with tightly wrapped *himation* veiling her face, from a provocative *hetaira*, who draws her veil aside and allows her *himation* to fall open suggestively.⁹

Menander's *Dyskolos* (*The Grouch*) illustrates the manner in which costume was put in service of character by the late fourth century and thereby offers useful contrast with the dynamics of Old Comic costume. The few references in the text of *Dyskolos* to any handling of clothing onstage serve one specific purpose – namely, to characterize the wealthy young man Sostratus. As Daos and Gorgias see Sostratus returning to the stage near the beginning of the second act, Gorgias describes him as “the man in the fancy cloak” (ὁ τὴν χλανίδ' ἔχων, 257) and then draws the immediate conclusion from his appearance that Sostratus is a rogue (κακοῦργος εὐθύς ἀπὸ τοῦ βλέμματος, 258). Later, when they begin digging in the field near the house of the grumpy old man whose daughter has attracted Sostratus's interest, it appears at first that Sostratus will merely be an observer, but Daos chastises him for this: “While we work, are you going to stand by wearing your fancy cloak?” (ἐργαζομένοις ἡμῖν παρεστήξεις ἔχων χλανίδα; [364–5]). Sostratus responds obligingly, saying “I'm ready to obey; lead on!” (ἔτοιμος πάντα πειθαρχεῖν· ἄγε, 370), ditches his

cloak, and joins in the digging. Later, Getas credits Pan with giving Sostratus a rough cloak and a mattock (διφθέραν τε καὶ δίκελλαν, 415–16). In the play's final act, as Gorgias is announcing the betrothal of Sostratus to the girl, he cites positively Sostratus's willingness, despite his wealth, to put himself on equal terms with the poor (761–71). A man such as this, says Gorgias, can bear the vicissitudes of fate; Sostratus has proved his character. The initial appearance of Sostratus in luxurious *chlanis*, followed by his removal of it, has visually demonstrated first his social status and then his willingness to look beyond it.

Comparison of this handling of costume in *Dyskolos* with the dynamics we have seen in Old Comedy highlights the evolution of comic costume. The sparing use of costume in the action of *Dyskolos*, its elegant deployment to make one and only one symbolic point, is more akin to tragic costume usage than to that of Aristophanes. On the other hand, the social status at stake in the exchange of one garment for another has Aristophanic precedents that reach back through the costume exchanges of *Wealth* to the socioeconomic aspects of costume in *Wasps*. Nevertheless, in Menander's play the costume change serves ultimately as an insight into character. Though visibly typecast from the start as the wealthy young man, Sostratus can (at least temporarily, for the sake of getting the girl) look beyond that status. Finally, it is worth noting that there lingers in *Dyskolos* the correlation between relinquished control of costume and other forms of subordination. When Sostratus takes off his fancy cloak at the bidding of Daos, he verbally expresses his obedience in all things (ἔτοιμος πάντα πειθαρχεῖν, 370) in a way reminiscent of the Relative's concession of control in *Women at the Thesmophoria*. Nevertheless, the agonistic, contested nature of this costume interaction is very much diminished. Sostratus is not a loser in some game of costume one-upmanship, as would be an Aristophanic character in a similar interaction. Rather, through his characteristically Menandrian ability to transcend character type, he wins the admiration of Gorgias and gets the girl.

Any notion that the dynamism of comic costume was on a perpetually downward trajectory is dispelled within a century after Menander by the costume hijinks of Plautus in performance. Disguise, deceit, mistaken identity, metatheater, and exchanges of clothing are all on dazzling display in the *fabula palliata*, Roman comedy in Greek dress. The extensive and dynamic manipulation of costume in Plautine drama, developed from Greek models but situated in the different circumstances of Roman comic production, deserves its own full-scale treatment.¹⁰

NOTES

I. INTRODUCTION: COMIC COSTUME IN ACTION

- 1 Hughes 2006.
- 2 Taplin 1977, 1978; Wiles 1991, 1997, 2000, 2007; Marshall 1993, 1996, 1999b, 2006; Slater 2002; Rehm 2002; Revermann 2006; Hughes 2012. Bierl 2009 focuses on performance situated in a ritual context.
- 3 Easterling and Hall 2002; Duncan 2006; Csapo 2010. On acting styles, see also Green 1997, 2002; Hughes 2012: 106–65.
- 4 Revermann 2006: 145–59; Hughes 2012: 178–91. Wyles 2011 makes a significant contribution to issues of costume in Greek tragedy and has valuable comments about Aristophanes as well.
- 5 E.g., Muecke 1977, 1982a; Slater 2002.
- 6 E.g., Körte 1893; Webster 1948; Bieber 1961; Trendall, *Ph V*²; Webster, *MMC*³.
- 7 E.g., Green 1985 through 2014; Taplin 1987, 1991, 1993; Neiiendam 1992; Schmidt 1998; Foley 2000; Revermann and Wilson 2008; Csapo 2010; Hughes 1997, 2003, 2006, 2012. For the visual arts and tragedy see, e.g., Todisco 2003; Kraus et al. 2007; and Taplin 2007.
- 8 For consistency's sake I use the phrase “southern Italian” rather than “west Greek” to refer to the origin of the so-called phlyax vases of the fourth century. Each phrase has its advantages, the former a clearer geographic reference point for the modern reader, the latter a better acknowledgment of the Greek cultural milieu in which this material was created. An indication of the extent to which the pendulum has swung to focus on archaeological evidence: the latest book on performance of Greek comedy (Hughes 2012) contains a sixteen-page “Catalogue of Objects Discussed” but no separate index of passages from extant plays or fragments.
- 9 E.g., Bonfante 1989; Stewart 1997; Llewellyn-Jones 2002; Cleland, Davies, and Llewellyn-Jones 2007. See the bibliographic survey by Gherchanoc and Huet 2007.
- 10 Zeitlin 1996; Foley 1981, 1982; Winkler 1990a, 1990b; Taaffe 1993; Bassi 1998; McClure 1999; Stehle 2002; Stroup 2004. Henderson's seminal work on obscenity (Henderson 1991), first published in 1975, also deserves to be cited here.
- 11 Generalizations about women and mimesis are still present in Cairns 2002: 80, who speaks of “a more general association between women, concealment, deceit, and the occult” in Greek thought, and Cawthorn 2008: 56, who refers to “the prevalent model of the female body as illusory, mimetic, deceptive, and dissonant in ancient Greek culture.”
- 12 Revermann 2006: 19–24 offers good comments on the pervasiveness of the “agonal spirit” of Old Comedy and its “nexus of competitive agendas.”
- 13 It is for this reason that the present study cannot better incorporate the tremendous advances in the study of comic fragments in the past two decades. Where possible, I take evidence from fragments into account, but, sadly, the fragments give us very little information about the costuming in nonextant plays (but see Revermann 2006: 299–319 on Aristophanes' rivals).
- 14 Revermann 2006: 66.

- 15 E.g., McDonald 1992; Van Steen 2000; Hall and Wrigley 2007.
- 16 Some of the most illuminating of such studies are those that involve theater practitioners who experience what it is like to perform in a mask. For example, see Marshall 1999b; McCart 2007; Wiles 2007, 2008; Varakis 2010.
- 17 Hughes 2006: 44–6 has good remarks about the differences in the two media (terracotta figurines and comic vases).
- 18 See Green 2006 and 2014a for discussions of regional variations in depictions of comedy.
- 19 See Green 1994: esp. 23–4; Schmidt 1998 offers a thorough attempt to filter out and identify iconographic conventions and Aristophanic elements in several important vases; for other examples, see Austin and Olson 2004: lxxvii (on the Würzburg Telephus vase) and Taplin 2007: 22–43. Osborne 2008 contextualizes drama-related vases within larger repertoires of painters and regions. Walsh 2009 places them in the context of the grotesque in Greek art more generally.
- 20 The exception is the set of Attic vases from the late sixth and early fifth centuries depicting choruses in animal costume and other strange attire. They will be treated in Chapter 5. See Taplin 1993: 57–60, 75–8 and Csapo 1994: 55–6 on possible representations of the chorus in later vase painting.
- 21 Dearden 2012 cautions that although a small group of southern Italian vases demonstrably depicts scenes from Athenian comedy, we should not therefore conclude that all such vases do so: the strong local traditions of theater in the West suggest that the comic performances depicted were a mixture of local plays and Athenian ones.
- 22 Würzburg H 5697, c. 370s. Kossatz-Deissmann 1980; Csapo 1986; Taplin 1987: 96–101, 1993: 36–40.
- 23 Already Webster 1948: 20–1 emphasized the similarities between the costuming on Attic comic terracottas and southern Italian vases. The seventh- and sixth-century vases depicting the so-called Corinthian padded dancers predate Athenian Old Comedy but have intriguing connections to its grotesque costuming. See Chapter 2 note 11.
- 24 βαβιαῖς. ὠκβάτανα, τοῦ σχήματος, *Ach.* 64.
- 25 Revermann 2006: 48.
- 26 For discussion of this principle, see especially Taplin 1977: 28–31 (with regard to tragedy); for comedy, Poe 2000; Porter 2004; Revermann 2006: 46–65.
- 27 For a survey of entrances, exits, and objects handled, see Poe 2000.
- 28 Poe 2000.
- 29 Here I disagree with Revermann 2006: 50, who challenges the notion that any stage action could be insignificant: “Nothing is insignificant. Theatre audiences, to deploy a vivid metaphor, are continually floating in a sea of meaning.” On the other hand, Poe 2000 overstates the inconsequentiality of most stage action in comedy. In my view, some stage actions are more significant than others, in comedy as well as in tragedy. The words shape the spectators’ perceptions of the action, guiding their attention to the most important fish in the theatrical “sea of meaning.”
- 30 This is what Poe 2000: 264 calls a “hierarchizing device.” Cf. Wyles 2011: 51, who speaks of a “partnership of visual (the actual costume) and verbal” elements in a production, and suggests that the verbal heightens the semiotic impact of the visual sign.
- 31 On this garment, see Taplin 1977: 310–16; Jenkins 1985: 116–20; Griffith 1988 (and countless others). For other studies of tragic costume, see, e.g., Worman 1999; Lee 2004; Wyles 2011.
- 32 The hectic activity of a comic performance is what gives Revermann 2006 its title (*Comic Business*) and is central to the argument of Poe 2000. Ley 2007: 275–6 makes a similar point about tragic and comic uses of stage properties: “Comedy rarely exploits a property for long, discarding objects quickly and absolutely. Tragedy, in contrast, may cling to a property throughout its action.”
- 33 Wyles 2011: 55–8 suggests that symbolic manipulation of props in Homer served as a predecessor for theatrical symbols.

- 34 Winkler 1990a: 179–80. Physical contact is rampant in Old Comedy (Revermann 2006: 132) and rarer and more stylized in tragedy (Kaimio 1988).
- 35 The word *σκευή* denotes both clothing and accessories: e.g., Arion's entire *aidos* outfit in Hdt. 1.24; the wearing of linen *chitons* and golden hairpins in Thuc. 1.6; Pausanias's Persian clothing in Thuc. 1.130; Cadmus's Dionysiac attire in Eur. *Bacch.* 180; the wretched garb of Oedipus in Soph. *OC* 555; Dionysus's Heracles getup in *Frogs* 108. The bottom layer, the bodysuit, is called “the *σκευή* of the actors” by Pollux 2.235. Uses of (ἐν)σκευάζω at *Ach.* 121, 383–4, 436, 739; *Thesm.* 591; *Frogs* 523; Plato, *Crito* 53d. Plato Comicus wrote a play called *Σκευαί*, but the surviving fragments are not illuminating, except perhaps for fr. 142, in which the speaker mentions a woman (presumably Electra) whom Euripides portrayed with a water jar.
- 36 The world of epic may seem far removed from that of comedy, until we consider that before Aristophanes, fifth-century comedy was intensely engaged with epic (not tragic) parody; see Revermann 2013 on “paraepic” strategies throughout the range of Old and Middle Comedy.
- 37 Choral disrobing occurs at *Ach.* 626–7, *Wasps* 408, *Peace* 729–31, *Lys.* 637, 662, 686, and *Thesm.* 655–6. The issue is summarized at Sifakis 1971: 105–6.
- 38 Disrobing for athletic competition is an action so commonly performed by fifth-century males that one might expect to find more evidence of it in Aristophanes. Such a dynamic would be akin to the stripping for physical activity done by the chorus. There is some evidence that it did indeed occur in at least one lost play. The two stage-nude combatants in the New York and Boston Goose Play vases (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 24.97.104, Figure 6; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 69.951, Figure 7) may have just stripped for their competition. In particular, the cloak draped on a herm in the Boston Goose Play vase and on the platform in the New York vase seems to indicate a recent disrobing. See Chapter 2 for more on these two vases. Something is also happening with a cloak on *PhV*² 107 (Apulian red-figure oinochoe, c. 350, Bari, Ricchioni coll.), which depicts two stage-nude characters, the one on the right leaning forward and holding a cloak, the one on the left gesticulating with one foot forward. Whether the intended recipient of the cloak is stepping into it or away from it is not clear to me.
- 39 In both *Iliad* 14 and the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the women add layers of finery as they prepare for the seduction, but they do not take off their own clothes. The *Iliad* passage makes no mention of the undressing of Hera, while in the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, it is Anchises who removes Aphrodite's garments piece by piece, an action that conveys Aphrodite's uncharacteristic submissiveness. In the “Cologne epode” of Archilochus (P. Colon. 7511), it is the young man again who handles the garments, covering the girl with a *chlaina* (with West's supplements in lines 29–30); there is no mention of undressing, though some skin is exposed (line 33). See Taaffe 1993: 67–8 on *H. Aphr.* and *Lys.*
- 40 *Il.* 22.124–5: κτενέει δέ με γυμνὸν ἐόντα / αὐτῶς ὥς τε γυναῖκα, ἐπεὶ κ' ἀπὸ τεύχεα δύω.
- 41 Griffith 1988 notes that in the *Oresteia*, all of the murdered characters except Aegisthus remove a piece of clothing before they enter the *skene* to die.
- 42 ἦττήμεθ'. ὦ κινούμενοι, / πρὸς τῶν θεῶν δέξασθέ μου / τοῖμάτιον, ὥς / ἔξαστομολῶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς. Cf. ἦττων spoken by the defrocked informer at *Wealth* 944.
- 43 *Il.* 2.259–64: μηκέτ' ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆϊ κάρη ὤμοισιν ἐπείη, / μηδ' ἔτι Τηλεμάχοιο πατὴρ κεκλημένος εἶην, / εἰ μὴ ἐγὼ σε λαβὼν ἀπὸ μὲν φίλα εἴματα δύσω, / χλαῖνάν τ' ἥδ' ἐχιτῶνα, τὰ τ' αἰδῶ ἀμφικαλύπτει, / αὐτὸν δὲ κλαίοντα θοᾶς ἐπὶ νῆας ἀφήσω / πεπληγῶν ἀγορήθεν ἀεικέσσι πληγῇσιν. Bassi 1998: 135.
- 44 οἴμοι τάλας, ἀποδύομαι μεθ' ἡμέραν (*Wealth* 930); ἄπειμι· γινώσκω γὰρ ἦττων ὦν πολὺ ὑμῶν (*Wealth* 944–5).
- 45 Cf. Cratinus fr. 330: ἀποδυθὶ τὴν στολήν (“strip off your robe”).
- 46 See Stone 1981: 399–407 for offstage costume changes. Change of a character's mask is extremely rare, since the mask serves as an identifying feature of the character for the

audience. In addition to Demos at *Knights* 1331, other likely instances include Pheidippides' altered appearance at *Clouds* 1167–76 and Wealth's restored appearance at *Wealth* 787.

47 See Wiles 2011: 67–8 for the addition of costume in tragedy.

48 Marshall 1993.

49 Wiles 2007: 42; see also Lada-Richards 1999, esp. 160–72.

50 Duncan 2006: 33 speaks of a “tension between the two theories of identity implied by Agathon's portrayal in the play.”

2. THE COMIC BODY AS COSTUME

1 E.g., Berger 1972: 54; Bonfante 1989; Bassi 1998: 99–103. See Hurwit 2007 for a reassessment of the concept of heroic nudity in art. Hurwit concludes (57): “Nudity does not mean one thing in classical Greek art. As in the art of other ancient cultures, it means many things; it is a costume with various roles whose significance is determined by context and subject rather than by abstract principle.” For another example, cf. Daehner 2006 on the “Inszenierung” (staging) of nudity in classical Greek sculpture.

2 Pollux 2.235. There is evidence for the use of this term in the fifth century: Photius s.v. *σωμάτια* quotes Plato Comicus (fr. 287): *σωμάτια τὰ ἀναπλάσματα, οἷς οἱ ὑποκριταὶ διασάττουσιν αὐτοὺς. οὕτως Πλάτων*. (“*somatia*: the forms with which the actors stuff themselves; so Plato”). See also Pollux 4.115 and Lucian *Iupp. Trag.* 41.

3 Varakis 2010: 22: “The head appears to be part of the grotesque whole and not an isolated part carrying its own meaning.” So also Wiles 2008: 381.

4 Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 380–370, *Ph V²* 33, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum inv. B-1661.

5 Stone 1981: 30.

6 Scenes of actors holding masks, including those on the Pronomos vase, are thoroughly discussed (with plates and drawings) in Wiles 2007: 20–40; see further Wiles 2007: 44–70 on the technique of mask making and its relationship to other sculptural arts of the fifth century.

7 Marshall 1999b argues that in fifth-century drama there was a fairly simple, nonindividuated system of masks, with only two main variables (sex and age), serving the goal of clear visual communication over a distance. On the basis of personal experimentation in a large open-air theater, Varakis 2010: 36 observes that “the only characteristics that were discernible from a distance were the shape and colour of the mask and colour of hair. All other facial details were indistinct.” The visibility of masks in performance depends on the size of the theater, which itself varied across periods and locations in antiquity. The size of the Theater of Dionysus in Athens in the fifth century has been revised far downward in recent years; Goette 2007: 120, for example, suggests a seating capacity in the range of six thousand.

See Stone 1981: 22–7 on the white mask of female characters. But see Wiles 2007: 30, who argues that “there is no firm evidence here that gender on fifth-century masks was systematically coded by colour.” White female masks can be observed on *Ph V²* 20, 27, 59 (Figure 22), 60, and 80 (Figure 16); conversely, the female masks on *Ph V²* 18, 33 (Figure 1), 37 (Figure 12), 45 (Figure 9), 148, 152, and the Würzburg Telephus (Figure 13) are not distinguished by color. The white color for female comic masks seems particularly common when the mask is disembodied (e.g., *Ph V²* 27, 59, 60, 80), presumably because the painter has little other means to make it clear that this is a female *prosopon*. On vases where female masks are not painted white, one explanation is that the painter felt it unnecessary to mark the female mask as white because the character's sex could be indicated by other means, usually dress.

8 See Stone 1981: 31–42 on the question of portrait and stereotyped masks. Marshall 1999b: 192–6 suggests some ways in which the simple classification of age and sex could be modified for special characters. For more on portrait masks, see Dover 1987 and Olson 1999. Varakis 2010: 28–9 cautions that there is not any visual evidence for portrait masks and that, at

any rate, in a large open-air theater any portrait mask could not have relied on subtle features; it would have to rely on the audience's ability to imagine the features of a well-known person. Wiles 2008: 376 observes a "universal comic face" on terracotta figurines of comic actors and suggests that a more generalized comic face makes it "easier for the imagination of the spectator to project meaning onto it."

9 Stone 1981: 42.

10 Pollux, *Onomasticon* book 4 (second century C.E.) gives us the first attempt at classifying masks. Webster 1970: 58–72 modified this classification, and in *MMC*³ 13–26 it is further adjusted; Trendall, in turn, adapts Webster's classification (*PhV*² pp. 12–13). Green 2003 traces the development of some mask and character types in the fourth century. For New Comedy masks, see especially *MNC*³ vol. 1, 6–31, which includes a comparison of Pollux's typology with the evidence of the monuments themselves.

11 For a survey of the evidence, see Stone 1981: 127–30. Foley 2000 and Piqueux 2006 incorporate vases that have come to light more recently.

There exists also a large corpus of seventh- and sixth-century vases from Corinth and elsewhere (including, eventually, Attica) depicting groups of grotesquely padded dancers, but any relationship they may have with Attic comedy itself is unclear. On these vases, see Seeberg 1971, 1995; Steinhart 2004: 32–64; Rusten 2006: 40–1; Rothwell 2007: 21–5; the contributions of Carpenter, Smith, Isler-Kerényi, and Green, as well as the editors' own introduction, to Csapo and Miller 2007; and Smith 2010. These depictions do provide early evidence for the transgressive, obscene potential of the grotesque body, and the antiheroic behavior it implies; nevertheless, as Smith's 2010 study demonstrates, the Attic iconography in the half-century before the institution of comedy at Athens moves *away* from the very features of the Corinthian material that might seem to indicate predramatic origins – public performances in grotesquely padded costume.

12 Terracotta figurines of comic actors are almost universally clothed; vases show proportionately more stage nudity.

13 Attic terracotta, c. 400, AT 12, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 13.225.13.

14 Foley 2000: 291–2; Piqueux 2006: 138–9. Breast padding on males becomes standard in Sicilian costume but is present in Attic as well.

15 Attic relief, c. 350–325, AS 3, Athens, Agora S 1025 and 1586; and Attic relief, c. 350–325, AS 4, Athens, Agora S 2098.

16 Attic red-figure chous, c. 400, *PhV*² 6, State Hermitage Museum Fa. 1869.47; see Rusten 2014 for a reassessment of this vase as evidence for Old Comic costume.

17 Attic polychrome oinochoe, c. 400, *PhV*² 13, Athens, Agora P23985; Crosby 1955: 81–2, pl. 34c. Compare also the man rowing a fish on another Attic oinochoe (*PhV*² 9, London, British Museum 98.2–27.1); Crosby 1955: 82–3, pl. 37.

18 Lucanian red-figure calyx-krater, c. 400, *PhV*² 84, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 24.97.104; Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 370, *RIAp* 100, 4/251, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 69.951. I follow the attribution of Denoyelle and Silvestrelli 2013, who argue that the New York vase should be attributed to the Dolon Painter rather than the Tarporley Painter and should therefore be called Lucanian rather than Apulian. On these vases, see further Taplin 1993: 30–2; Schmidt 1998: 23–8; and Marshall 2001. Other vases that appear to depict stage nudity include *PhV*² 1, 3 (Figure 11), 31, 41, 44, 48 (Figure 18), 62, 63, 65, 67, 75, 107, 118 (Figure 19); Sydney, Nicholson Museum NM 88.2 (*RIAp* Suppl. 2, 52, no. 5/200b, Walsh 2009 fig. 101); Malibu 96.AE.113 (*RIAp* Suppl. 2, Postscript 564, no. 10/46a, Green 2001 pl. 8, Hughes 2012 fig. 48); Metaponto 29062 (Hughes 2012 fig. 1). Hughes 2006: 46 estimates that more than 20% of male figures on surviving vases are stage nude.

19 Piqueux 2006: 136 on the possibility of padding tied on top of the leotard. Piqueux also sees tied-on padding on a Paestan krater depicting Zeus and Hermes (Vatican U 19 inv. 17106, *PhV*² 65, Trendall 1936: 48, pl. IXc).

20 Paestan calyx-krater, c. 350–325, *RVP* 2/175, Berlin, Staatliche Museum F 3044.

- 21 See Hughes 2003 on the distinctive Paestan costume. Hughes suggests (295) that Asteas, the painter of many of the Paestan comic scenes, saw this type of costume in Sicily where it was temporarily in fashion; when he returned to Paestum, Asteas continued to depict this type of costume throughout his career, even though it had passed out of fashion elsewhere. In any case Paestan depictions probably reflect Sicilian as distinct from Attic practice; see also the cautionary comments of Green 2012: 323–4.
- 22 Attic red-figure cup fragment, c. 450–430, Athens, Agora P 10798; Moore 1997: 326 no. 1449, pl. 136; Webster 1960: 261, pl. 67.
- 23 Stone 1981: 136.
- 24 Foley 2000: 281. The sleeves and leggings are still visible but much less obvious by the late fourth century and into the third century (Green 2007a: 181).
- 25 For details on the pigmentation of the terracottas, see Stone 1981: 143 n. 29.
- 26 Trendall 1936: 27; see also Hughes 2003.
- 27 Hughes 2006: 62.
- 28 The crucial debate was between Webster and Beare in the 1950s: Beare 1954, 1957, 1959; Webster 1955, 1957. See Stone 1981: 72–100 for a review of the issue. Green 2006 demonstrates how the long dangling phallus continued to be used in some iconography of the late fourth century and even beyond, as a way of harking back to an older form of comedy.
- 29 A few terracotta figurines show red pigmentation on the phalluses (Stone 1981: 96).
- 30 Foley 2000: 296–300. See also the remarks of Bassi 1998: 139 (though I would not go so far as to call the stage phallus “an overdetermined apotropaic gesture against emasculation”).
- 31 Compare the head-to-toe clothing of a modern clown, with wig, painted face, and full-length clown suit. An important possible exception, certain female characters, will be considered later.
- 32 It is unclear whether the mask held by the central figure on the St. Agata Antigone vase (Figure 22) was actually ever worn by him and removed onstage. See Chapter 4 for more on this vase. The early fourth-century Attic bell-krater (Heidelberg Institute of Archaeology B134) that depicts two apparently comic choral dancers, one masked and one with mask on back of head (perhaps in the act of removing it), does not explicitly show them onstage. This is just as likely some kind of offstage scene depicting the process of (un)masking, as on the Pronomos vase. For more on this vase, see Wiles 2007: 36–8.
- 33 Foley 2000; Piqueux 2006: 135.
- 34 See Green 1994: 26–7, who suggests that the differing artistic conventions for depicting tragic and comic scenes reflect differences in the audience’s perception of each genre. Satyr play occupies a middle place between the two: satyric scenes are sometimes depicted as “real” and sometimes as artificial (Green 1994: 39–46).
- 35 Piqueux 2006: 139; Revermann 2006: 145–7.
- 36 Winkler 1990b; Green 2002: 104.
- 37 Foley 2000: 310.
- 38 Revermann 2006: 149–52. See Walsh 2009: 105–64, “Ridiculing the Gods,” on artistic portrayals of gods in a grotesque manner. The attempt by Wrenhaven 2013 to discuss characteristics of the comic slave in Greek art is complicated, as she herself realizes, by the fact that “comedy does not restrict slavish characteristics to slaves” and the grotesque body is shared by most characters (125, 137–43).
- 39 Worman 2008: 70.
- 40 Xen. *Symp.* 9.5: οἱ δ’ ὁρῶντες ὄντως καλὸν μὲν τὸν Διόνυσον, ὥραϊαν δὲ τὴν Ἀριάδην, οὐ σκώπτοντας δὲ ἀλλ’ ἀληθινῶς τοῖς στόμασι φιλοῦντας, πάντες ἀνεπερωμένοι ἐθεῶντο. See Green 2001: 37–8 for discussion of a scene in which a hetaira makes the rare gesture of embracing and intending to kiss a comic figure (on an Apulian situla, c. 350, Aliano 32095).
- 41 And, of course, both male underneath the costume. McCart 2007: 259–60.
- 42 Foley 2000: 284–5.
- 43 Wiles 2007.
- 44 Wiles 2007: 15–43.

- 45 Hughes 2012: 170–1 is similarly skeptical of the transformative, as opposed to alienating, power of the comic mask.
- 46 Hall 1998.
- 47 Green 1994: 71.
- 48 See Green 2001: 46–51 on the gradual increase in the number and range of female characters on comic vases, eventually including the *hetaira* by the mid-fourth century; these *hetaira* characters with a more natural female form appear at about the time male characters are starting to lose some of their grotesque padding. One wishes for some evidence about the costuming of the *hetaira* characters who play prominent parts in plays by the fifth-century comic poet Pherecrates (Henderson 2000).
- 49 Alexis 103.13, speaking of prostitutes who camouflage their flaws, says that “they have breasts (made) of the same things as comic actors have” (στηθί’ ἔστ’ αὐτοῖσι τοῦτων ὧν ἔχουσ’ οἱ κωμικοί). The speaker does not distinguish comic actors playing female roles from those playing male roles.
- 50 Stone 1981: 129.
- 51 In the St. Agata Antigonē bell-krater (Figure 22), the central figure wears female clothing with the phallus visible through it. Yet he is not just any comic actor, but one who has cross-dressed in a transparent female robe; in the case of other female comic characters, artists do not represent visible phalluses under the robes.
- 52 The Attic oinochoe portraying a comic Tyro and her sons (c. 400, *PhV*² 10, Athens, Agora P 23856, Webster 1960 pl. 65) preserves the name of Tyro and Neleus but only the face of Neleus.
- 53 Green 1994: 71. Of the approximately three hundred individuals depicted, “Wives” constitute 4.71%, “Old Women” 6.06%, and “Young Women” 3.71%. Compare “Old Men” at 31.31%, and (male) “Slaves” at 44.78%. Terracotta figurines present a slightly different picture: Wives 0.72%, Old Women 8.25%, and Young Women 16.35% (Green 1994: 72). In the fourth century, young women and young men make up a progressively greater and greater share of the characters depicted, as might be expected with the advent of New Comedy.
- 54 Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 400–380, *PhV*² 45, Milan, Civico Museo Archeologico AO.9.284.
- 55 Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 375–350, *RVAp* supp. ii. 64, Atlanta, Michael C. Carlos Museum L1989.2.2. Compare also the wife leaning around the door in the “Birth of Helen” Apulian red-figure bell-krater (c. 380–370, *PhV*² 18, Bari, Museo Nazionale 3899).
- 56 Similar sleeves appear on the women in *PhV*² 20 (Apulian bell-krater, c. 375–350, Bari 8014); *PhV*² 24 (Apulian bell-krater, c. 400–375, Cambridge, Harvard University); *PhV*² 60 (Apulian bell-krater, c. 375–350, Taranto 107937); and *PhV*² 152 (Apulian fragment, c. 375–350, Würzburg H 4711).
- 57 Lucanian red-figure bell-krater, c. 375–350, *PhV*² 57, Metaponto 297053, Green 2001 fig. 9. Piqueux 2006: 136, for example, thinks the under-costume is revealed; Rusten 2011: 450, on the other hand, describes it as a diaphanous *chiton*. In *hetaira* figures such as this one, which become increasingly popular throughout the fourth century, we also see a reduction in grotesque features. See Green 2001 for a review of *hetairai* in comic scenes and Green 2012: 304–5 for a discussion and another illustration of Metaponto 297053.
- 58 Stone 1981: 299.
- 59 Attic red-figure chous, c. 410, *PhV*² 3, Paris, Louvre N3408; M9.
- 60 Revermann 2006: 145–7 cites this vase as an example of the way comedy uses ugliness to appropriate images into its own genre; yet it is just a partial appropriation, because only Nike’s face, not her body, is ugly. Wilson 2007 emphasizes the beauty of the goddess Nike in Athens, whose “principal task ... is to bring a vision of beauty and transcendence to those areas of mortal life ... where her [violent] brothers are active” (258–9). In his discussion of *nike* in comedy, Wilson suggests that “comedy turns the ‘ugliness’ that is central to its generic identity to the end of exposing and questioning the assumption that *nikē* is ‘naturally’ *kalē*” (268).

- 61 Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 380, *PhV²* 37, London, British Museum 1849, 0620.13 (F 151).
- 62 Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 370s, *RVAp* 65, 4/4a, Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum H 5697.
- 63 See Taplin 1993: 36–41. Kossatz-Deissmann 1980: 287 suggests that the woman, with her old features, represents a nurse of Orestes.
- 64 Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 375–350, *PhV²* 34, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum B-2074.
- 65 Depictions of flute players have been discussed by Taplin 1991 and 1993: 67–78. In addition to the vases I mention here, two others (Campanian red-figure bell-krater, c. 350–325, *PhV²* 55, Princeton 50.64; and Apulian red-figure calyx-krater, c. 365–350, *RVAp* 400, 15/28, pl. 140, Bari, Malaguzzi-Valeri Coll. 52, Taplin 1993 pl. 14.11) show flute players of indeterminate sex, standing offstage and clothed as the official *auletes*.
- 66 Campanian red-figure bell-krater, c. 350–325, *PhV²* 56, Rio de Janeiro, Museu Nacional 1500, Taplin 1993 pl. 15.14.
- 67 Campanian red-figure bell-krater, c. 350–325, *PhV²* 26, *LCS* 410, 337, Frankfurt α 2562.
- 68 Campanian red-figure bell-krater, c. 350–325, *LCS* supp. ii. 222, 337b, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria D14/1973, Taplin 1993 pl. 15.13.
- 69 Taplin 1993: 70–8, a reworking of Taplin 1991. See in particular the “Bari Pipers” calyx-krater (Apulian, c. 365–350, Bari, Malaguzzi-Valeri Coll. no. 52, Taplin 1993 pl. 14.11) on which the slim, unmasked *auletes* crouches to one side while two grotesquely costumed and masked actors sport with *auloi* onstage. The *auletes* appears to one side of the chorus on most of the vases considered in Chapter 5 (see Table 1).
- 70 See Taplin 1993: 70–3 on the indeterminate sex of the *aulos* players on several vases.
- 71 Paestan red-figure skyphos, c. 350–325, *PhV²* 96, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum AN1945.43. I am much indebted to the discussion of the acrobat vases by Marshall 2000.
- 72 Paestan red-figure calyx-krater, c. 350, *PhV²* 80, Lipari, Museo Archeologico Luigi Bernabò Brea 927.
- 73 Also onstage, on the other side of the acrobat, is a seated Dionysus figure depicted naturalistically, that is, not in comic costume. Like everyone else, he is looking at the acrobat in the center. On depictions of Dionysus as a companion of actors, see Green 1994: 84–95.
- 74 The five others are:
- An Apulian skyphos (c. 375–350, *PhV²* 94) on which a comic male knocks at a door, from which an apparently unmasked woman peeps out (although much of her body is hidden behind the door).
 - An Apulian oinochoe (c. 375–350, *PhV²* 110): Heracles pursues an unmasked woman holding an oinochoe.
 - A Paestan calyx-krater (c. 370–360, *PhV²* 91) on which a masked, *somation*-clad comic male is depicted cavorting between two taller uncostumed women. Trendall 1935: 48 notes that this is “the first appearance of a phlyax on a Paestan vase.”
 - A Sicilian calyx-krater (c. 350–325, *PhV²* 78) from Lipari on which a tall unmasked woman stands between two masked, *somation*-clad comic males. See Murray 1886 for a sketch (and, allegedly, a plate, though the plate did not exist in my edition).
 - A Paestan bell-krater (c. 330–320, *PhV²* 46) on which two comic slaves escort a tall unmasked woman (sometimes interpreted as Briseis).

There is also an Apulian krater (mid-fourth century, Taranto I.G. 4638) that depicts a nude female dancer, labeled KONNAKIS. Hughes 1997 argues that she is a comic performer, but other evidence indicates that she was a real person, not a comic character; see Ancona 1997: 134–6 for another vase with a dedicatory inscription from Konnakis.

- 75 The situation may have been similar for terracotta figurines, where an uncostumed figure, without the stage context that a vase painting can provide, would be hard to detect as comic. According to Stone 1981: 149, Körte “*a priori* eliminated all naked female terra-cottas from his survey” of comic figures.

- 76 See Zweig 1992 for an examination of the issue, reconsidered in Marshall 2000 in light of the acrobat vases. More recently, Hughes 2012: 213–14 argues that the flute-player Dardanis in *Wasps* and the dancer Elaphion in *Women at the Thesmophoria* were played by real women.
- 77 See Walsh 2009: 249 on non-grotesque characters who highlight the grotesquerie of their companions. Walsh also notes (2009: 254–5) that the women who accompany comic actors are often taller than the actors, thereby emphasizing the short stature of the comic figures.
- 78 Apulian red-figure bell-krater, c. 400–380, *RI4p* supp. ii. 7–8, 1/124, Naples, Museo Nazionale 248778 (formerly Malibu 96.AE.20). See Taplin 1993: 55–63 for a full discussion of this vase; also Shapiro 1995 and Piqueux 2006: 139–40.
- 79 Taplin 1993: 62; Marshall 2001. For a complete and up-to-date review of the vase, see Denoyelle and Silvestrelli 2013. Likewise on the Cheiron krater (Figure 12), the oversized rears and graceless posture of the three comic males are rendered all the more striking by the presence of a slim, neatly wrapped young man immediately to their right.
- 80 Revermann 2006: 155–6 distinguishes the kind of strict juxtaposition between tragic and comic figures as evidenced on the Choregoi krater from more “layered” ways of incorporating characters from tragedy. In Revermann’s view, none of the paratragic figures in Aristophanes is of this strictly juxtaposed type; rather, all have been to some degree appropriated into the ugliness of the comic world.
- 81 Wyles 2011: 47–50 compares this scene with those in tragedy in which one character tries to “interpret” another’s costume (e.g., Aesch. *Suppl.* 234–53).
- 82 Taplin 1993: 62 suggests that the ΤΡΑΓΟΙΔΟC figure of the New York Goose Play vase represents “a diminishment of tragedy.” See Stehle 2002: 379–81 and esp. Piqueux 2006: 138 on the problematic references to breasts in *Women at the Thesmophoria* as something specifically female, when we know they were worn by male characters as well. For more on Agathon, see Chapter 4 and Duncan 2006: 32–47. Agathon’s body remains a locus of attention as he goes on to present his views about gender and mimesis (σῶμα’ *Thesm.* 152; ἐν τῷ σώματι *Thesm.* 154; Duncan 2006: 42–3).
- 83 Revermann 2006: 145–59, especially 154–6.
- 84 Stone 1981: 97.
- 85 Stone 1981: 45. Worman 2008. Two vases nicely illustrate the connection between the mouth and gluttony. In the Charis vase (Figure 9), the central figure holds a cake in front of her gaping mouth; in *Ph V*² 31 (Apulian bell-krater, c. 380–370, St. Petersburg 299), Heracles drops food into his widely gaping mouth.
- 86 Henderson 1991: 125.
- 87 Piqueux 2006: 140.
- 88 Porter 2004.
- 89 Campanian red-figure bell-krater, c. 350–325, *Ph V*² 48, Naples, Museo Nazionale 81926.
- 90 Piqueux 2006: 140. Cf. *Wealth* 560–1, where wealth is said to make one fat, while poverty makes one lean. Clownishness and plenitude converge in the Bakhtinian conception of the grotesque body (Foley 2000: 302).
- 91 Foley 2000: 298–301 and Stehle 2002: 374–6 provide good overviews of the use of the phallus.
- 92 Stroup 2004: 67 notes that a black-figure kylix (Berlin, Antikensammlung 3251, c. 510) depicts a nude woman leading a symposiast by the penis. Cf. the instructions to Reconciliation to grab the men’s phalluses at *Lys.* 1119.
- 93 In this sense, the claim of the *Clouds* parabasis (537–9) that this play does not display the phallus may not be completely disingenuous.
- 94 Henderson 1991: 128 argues for a connection between wings and the phallus.
- 95 Foley 2000: 298.
- 96 Apulian red-figure oinochoe, c. 375–350, *Ph V*² 118, reported Syracuse, N.Y., but whereabouts unknown.

- 97 In *Knights* (1389–94), the Spondai (Treaties) are handed over to Demos to take home with him, but no further action with them is specified; the play is more interested in getting in a few more jabs at Paphlagon/Cleon.
- 98 Cratinus fr. 335: ὥς <δὲ> μαλακὸν καὶ τέρεν τὸ χρωτίδιον <ἦν>, ὦ θεοί! / καὶ γὰρ ἐβλίμαζον αὐτήν, ἢ δ' ἐφρόντιζ' οὐδὲ ἔν. The last line may well make reference to the woman's status as a mute character.
- 99 Slater 1989b.
- 100 See Revermann 2006: 150–1 on degrees of ugliness in this scene. When the young man anticipates his visit to her, he focuses on her bosom (*Ass.* 963–4) and her behind (*Ass.* 965).
- 101 The attention paid to Procne's beak in *Birds* is a specially motivated exception, discussed in Chapter 5.
- 102 Foley 2000: 302–3 emphasizes the negative aspects of the grotesque body in *Knights*.
- 103 Given this play's focus on the comic body and the nearly complete absence of references to characters' clothing, it is tempting to imagine the three characters stage-nude until the play's conclusion, although the argument from silence is not conclusive. As I discuss in Chapter 3, comedy often leaves the undergarment (such as *chiton* or *exomis*) unmentioned, while archaeological remains indicate that it was common. In any case, the lack of references to clothing indicates the priority that the play places on the body rather than clothing.
- 104 The phallus figures in the masturbation joke by the two slaves in the prologue (24–9), and not directly again until 964 (circumcision joke) and 1010 (where Sausage-Seller suggests that Paphlagon can “bite his dick”).
- 105 Line 388, “he is being held around the middle” (νῦν γὰρ ἔχεται μέσος), may also more indirectly reference the padded stomach.
- 106 Henderson 1991: 210.
- 107 Worman 2008: 91–2.
- 108 Other examples of πρῶκτός at 428, 640, 721, and 878; cf. κοχώνα at 424 and 484. Gaping is mentioned at 755, 804, 824, 956, 1018, 1032, 1119, and 1263.
- 109 Stone 1981: 41–2 lists this as an example of change of mask (one of only three in extant Aristophanes).
- 110 Thierry 2005: 86 suggests that there is also a change of actor, from the tritagonist who played the role of Demos for the first part of the play to the deuteragonist who plays him at the end.
- 111 Cf. Thuc. 1.6.3 for the cicada and linen chitons. Stone 1981: 177 suggests that Demos is wearing the purple robe (ἄλουρίς) that the Sausage-Seller had offered him at 967–9. As Revermann 2006: 121 observes, these striking changes in the appearance of Demos contrast with earlier ineffective attempts by Paphlagon and the Sausage-Seller to bribe him with new pieces of clothing.
- 112 Sommerstein 1981 ad loc.: “It must have been a full-length robe, for elsewhere we find it being worn by women and dedicated by them to Artemis Brauronia (*IG* ii² 1514.16, 48).” Stone 1981: 176–7.
- 113 The only costume consideration examined by Revermann (2006: 238–9) in his treatment of *Lysistrata*'s staging is the question of whether Lysistrata's costume could have signaled an identification with the priestess Lysimache. Fletcher 1999, on the image of the sacrificial body in *Lysistrata*, has little to say about the staging of the body.
- 114 Henderson 1991: 98–9; Bassi 1998: 109–10; Stehle 2002: 376.
- 115 Taaffé 1993: 54, 73.
- 116 Stroup 2004.
- 117 Stroup 2004: 56 suggests that these are “luxury clothing items of the sort associated with *hetairai*.” On the comic stage, though, these clothes would better be described as hyperfeminine than as “hetairic.” The *crokotidion* of the citizen wife in *Ass.* (331–2), for example, serves to contrast with the masculine apparel that belongs to her husband; likewise, the *crokotos* put on by the Relative at *Thesm.* 253 is feminine, not necessarily hetairic. It is overstatement on Stroup's part to say that this garment is “one of the literary-visual markers of ‘working girls’” (56 n. 36). See also Sebesta 2002 on the overlap between the dress of wives and *hetairai* in visual media, and Dalby 2002 on the dress of prostitutes.

- 118 For a good summary of who is wearing what in this play, see Henderson 1980: 162–5.
- 119 Stewart 1997: 30, who cites Anacreon fr. 399, in which a girl is urged to strip off her *chiton* and “go Dorian” (ἐκδύσῃ κίθωνά δωριάζειν).
- 120 Taaffe 1993: 56.
- 121 On the masculine qualities of Lysistrata herself, see Henderson 1980: 169; Taaffe 1993: 61–2, 72.
- 122 On paleness of skin as a desirable quality in women, see *Birds* 668, *Thesm.* 191, *Ass.* 699; Thomas 2002.
- 123 Henderson 1980: 165.
- 124 Wilamowitz 1958: 128–9.
- 125 For pubic hair on the *somation*, see Figures 6, 7, and 19.
- 126 Corinthians were proverbially opulent, so commentators usually assume a very full figure for this character (Henderson 1987a ad loc.).
- 127 See Stone 1981: 144–54 on range of meanings of *gymnos*.
- 128 Taaffe 1993: 60 discusses the Spartan connection but misses the echo of Lampito’s onstage experience.
- 129 The image of people dressed in armor recurs frequently, adding counterpoint to the feminine attire that dominates the play: 49–53, 555–64, 631–3, 742–57 (the helmet-baby).
- 130 See Whitman 1964: 207–8 and Vaio 1973: 373–4 on the wool-working image.
- 131 Bowie 1993: 180.
- 132 Bowie 1993: 180–1 and Faraone 1997; Sommerstein 1990 ad loc.
- 133 Aristophanes’ lost *Amphiaraos* (fr. 33) and *Geras* (fr. 129), cited by Henderson 1987a ad loc., both contain references to rejuvenation through the shedding of skin, so the bodysuit may have been implied there as well.
- 134 Henderson 1987a ad loc.; also 1991: 132.
- 135 The women redress sometime between 829 and 1013.
- 136 Sommerstein 1990 ad 800: “Since the men are naked (see on 662), the hair referred to, which is revealed only when they kick a leg, must be behind, not above, the genitals, as ‘hairy-arsed’ [802–3] confirms.” Pace Henderson 1980: 165, the members of the male chorus must be wearing phalluses, which would be a crucial key to distinguishing them from the female members of the chorus.
- 137 Cf. *Lys.* 728–30.
- 138 See Sommerstein 1990 on line 931 for the sequence of actions.
- 139 See Stone 1981: 180–1 on *phoinikis* and 167 on *katonake*.
- 140 On such female personifications, see Newiger 1957: 104–11; Zweig 1992; Stroup 2004: 63–8.
- 141 Taaffe 1993: 71: “Woman has been put back in one of her rightful places, as a silent token of exchange between men.” See also Bowie 1993: 202. Line 1157, with its use of the rare Doric adjective χαίωτέραν to describe Reconciliation (or Lysistrata?), makes the link to the prologue explicit (cf. χάϊα, 90).
- 142 Stroup 2004: 66 on the gesture.
- 143 Stroup 2004: 66.
- 144 Those who believe that Reconciliation was a nude *hetaira* include Wilamowitz 1958: 186–7 and McLeish 1980: 153. Zweig 1992 thinks it possible that some of the sexually exploited female characters in comedy were real *hetairai*, while others (e.g., the piggies in *Acharnians*) would have been more effectively played by costumed men.
- 145 Henderson’s argument (1980: 163), that since Lampito was played by a man “there is no reason to assume differently in the case of Diallage,” ignores the possibility that Lampito is intended precisely to violate convention.
- 146 Those who believe Reconciliation was a *somation*-clad male actor include Vaio 1973: 379 n. 48; Henderson 1980: 163; Sommerstein 1990 on *Lys.* 1114; Revermann 2006: 254; and McCart 2007: 260. Stone 1981: 147–50 deems the evidence inconclusive, but cautiously prefers men in bodysuits.
- 147 Henderson 1991: 139. For the *enkyklon*, cf. *Lys.* 113 and Stone 1981: 164–5.
- 148 ὄψεται δ’ οὐδὲν σκοπῶν, εἰ μὴ τις ὑμῶν / ὀξύτερον ἑμοῦ βλέπει.

3. CLOAKS, SHOES, AND SOCIETAL REDRESS

- 1 A survey of standard comic garb is presented in Stone 1981: 155–97; Hughes 2006: 47–61, 2012: 183–9. For the comic *chiton* in particular, see Stone 1981: 170–80. On Greek dress in general, see Bieber 1928 (with many plates and illustrations); Losfeld 1991, 1994; Hirschmann 1999 for a briefer account; Cleland, Davies, and Llewellyn-Jones 2007.
- 2 E.g., AT 36, 45, 46, 60, 64, etc. Hughes 2006: 54 observes that the male tunic becomes less visible over time, because in the second half of the fourth century more characters are depicted with cloaks covering their tunics. According to Hughes, in the first half of the century 50% of citizens and 27% of slaves on comic vases wore cloaks; after 350, the proportions are 75% of citizens and 43% of slaves.
- 3 Stone 1981: 194 n. 78 notes that “Pollux (4.118) and Hesychius (s.v.) both seem to indicate a special relationship between the ἐξωμίς and comic actors.” The *exomis* is not always lowly, however. Geddes 1987: 312 notes that it can be worn by gods and heroes who are physically active.
- 4 Stone 1981: 174–5; Hughes 2006: 48, 2012: 184–85. Hughes notes that of nineteen female comic terracottas with discernible paint, only two are yellow.
- 5 Hughes 2012: 187–9; Stone 1981: 155–70, both with thorough documentation of the archaeological record.
- 6 Geddes 1987: 312–13 emphasizes the impracticality of the Athenian *himation*.
- 7 Cohen 2001: 252–3 (speaking of the *himation* worn alone); Geddes 1987: 325–30 and Jeammet 2003 see a connection between the *himation* and democratic egalitarianism.
- 8 Interpreters of terracotta figurines (e.g., Webster 1948) use the presence of *himation* and shoes as evidence that the character represented is not a slave. But see this chapter’s note 2 for increased presence of cloaks on slave characters as the fourth century goes on.
- 9 Olson 2002: lxvi–lxviii.
- 10 Stone 1981: 160 on the female *himation*.
- 11 Hughes 2012: 185 and 188. See Wyles 2011: 34–40 on fabrics and colors in tragic costume and 80–5 for ways of depicting ethnicity in tragic dress.
- 12 I count only three references to clothing in the whole play (303, 1002, and 1173), and none of them refers to onstage clothing. Stage properties are far more important: for example, the agricultural tools carried by the chorus and put aside at 729–31; some kind of equipment carried by Theoria (either τὰ σκεύη as in the manuscripts, or Meineke’s emendation τὴν σκευήν) put aside at 886; and the weaponry brought by the arms dealer at 1210–64.
- 13 See Losfeld 1991: 139–44 on various methods of draping the *himation*.
- 14 For this manner of holding the *himation*, cf. also the leftmost old man on the Reckoning krater (Figure 1, though his is slightly disarrayed) and the two *choregoi* (Figure 17), as well as the leftmost figure on the St. Agata Antigone krater (Figure 22). Other examples include *PhV*² 60 (the rightmost figure), 112, 114, 115, 122, 126, and 133; AT 36a, ET 2. For examples of bad taste in draping the *himation*, see Aeschines 1.25; Demosthenes 19.314; Plato, *Theaetetus* 175e; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 28.3; Theophr. *Char.* 4.4–5; Plut. *Alc.* 16.1; Archippus fr. 48.
- 15 Hughes 2012: 147.
- 16 Stone 1981: 155–6. See MMC³ 205–9 for a catalog of poses among the terracottas (and passim for the clothing of individual figurines); Green 1997 and 2002 examine various stances.
- 17 Green 1997 and 2002 (esp. 114–21); Hughes 2012: 158–9. The longer *himation* used in tragic staging may have had a more restricting effect; Wiles 2000: 156 argues that it “imposed a bodily discipline involving stillness, balance, and restricted gesture”; cf. Green 2002: 106.
- 18 Attic terracotta, c. 400, AT 9, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 13.225.26.
- 19 Attic terracotta, c. 400, AT 10, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 13.225.23.
- 20 *PhV*² 107, Bari, Ricchioni Collection. Cf. the scene on a midcentury Apulian calyx-krater (*PhV*² 83, Naples 118333), in which a young man hands a bundle of clothing to a woman.

- 21 These same features of the *himation* (loose attachment and variety of draping) help to make possible the iconic depiction of the citizen male in fifth- and fourth-century art – namely, the unique combination of heroic nudity with distinctively Athenian dress.
- 22 Stone 1981: 166 on the διφθέρα and 182 on the ξυστίς.
- 23 Hughes 2006: 60 n. 82.
- 24 Austin and Olson 2004: lxxvi–lxxvii suggest that the iconography of the scene benefits from the absence of Agathon’s fancy shoes, which might interfere with the image of the Euripidean Telephus-as-beggar. Note also that the “Berlin Heracles” bell-krater (*PhV*² 22, formerly Berlin, Staatliche Museen F3046, now lost), which may represent the door-knocking scene of *Frogs*, depicts the Dionysus-Heracles figure stage-naked and bare-foot, although *Frogs* 46–7 indicates that he is wearing the *krokotos* and *kothornos* (Taplin 1993: 47; Csapo 2010: 58–61).
- 25 Stone 1981: 222; Hughes 2006: 60–1; similar but with slightly less detail, Hughes 2012: 189–90.
- 26 Hughes 2006: 61. Stone 1981: 225 suggests, “The one archaeological monument which in my opinion might represent the ἑμβάς of Aristophanic comedy is AB 3 [an Attic bronze statuette found in Dodona, *MMC*³ p. 117, with one leg missing], but this is merely an educated guess.”
- 27 Wyles 2011: 7–8 notes that the earliest depictions of tragic performers also show them in bare feet. Hughes 2006: 60 notes, “Most vase painters show little interest in shoes; they tend to master one type and stick to it.”
- 28 Hughes 2012: 189.
- 29 Mime, which has its roots in Sicily, is said to have been performed by barefoot actors; cf. *planipes* at Juv. 8.191 and Gell. 1.11.12.
- 30 Bryant 1899: 72.
- 31 Morrow 1985: 64–6, 87–9; Goette 1988: 423–44; see Cohen 2001 on the incorporation of non-Attic apparel into Athenian dress. See the drawing in Hirschmann 2001: 255.
- 32 Stone 1981: 223–5.
- 33 Stone 1981: 225–7.
- 34 Stone 1981: 224–5; cf. MacDowell 1971: 145; Sommerstein 1998: 142.
- 35 *Wasps* 1157–8, *Ass.* 848–50, *Wealth* 847.
- 36 Six plays (*Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, and *Frogs*) make no mention of *embades*, while these two plays (*Wasps* and *Assemblywomen*) account for more than half of the total references. These two are not, of course, the only plays where characters go outside, or where prominent characters are old middle-to-lower-class males. But these are the two plays that deal most directly with institutions of democracy – the law-courts and the assembly.
- 37 ὑποδείσθε δ’ ὡς τάχιστα τὰς Λακωνικάς, / ὥσπερ τὸν ἄνδρ’ ἐθεᾶσθ’, ὅτ’ εἰς ἐκκλησίαν / μέλλοι βαδίζειν ἢ θύραζ’ ἐκάστοτε.
- 38 Cf. *Knights* 319–21, where Demosthenes claims that Paphlagon tricked him with flimsy shoes, “so that I became a huge laughingstock to my *demesmen* and friends (τοῖς δημόταισι καὶ φίλοις, 320). Before I got to Pergase, I was swimming in my *embades*.” (For the sake of this joke, Demosthenes’ status as slave is temporarily put aside; Sommerstein 1981: 160).
- 39 I owe this point to Daniel Levine (private correspondence). For the use of Thracian dress in depictions of Athenian horsemen, see Cohen 2001: 247–51.
- 40 Morrow 1985: 87–8.
- 41 Konstan 1985; MacDowell 1995: 150–79; Rothwell 1995; and Olson 1996.
- 42 Bowie 1993: 78–101.
- 43 Whitman 1964: 143–66, esp. 160: “The futility of education and the incorrigibility of nature is the principle theme.”
- 44 Vaio 1971: 335–6.
- 45 The decreased emphasis on the *tribonion* in the choral passages is probably due to the fact that the chorus members wear *himatia*, not *tribonia*; their more ample *himatia* are necessary to conceal the stingers that the chorus will reveal at 408.

- 46 Cp. *Knights* 868–74.
- 47 E.g., MacDowell 1971: 194; Stone 1981: 223; but Sommerstein 1983 ad loc. suggests that the phrase is a substitute for “benefits received.”
- 48 On the relationship between Philocleon’s role in the city and his role within his *oikos*, see Konstan 1985: 41–2; Olson 1996: 137; and Crane 1997, esp. 218–21.
- 49 Bowie 1993: 94.
- 50 Olson 1996.
- 51 Olson 1996: 143. For the named participants in this symposium, see Storey 1985.
- 52 Olson 1996: 142–4.
- 53 Bowie 1993: 78–101.
- 54 Bowie 1993: 48–9 collects examples of ritual clothes changing and transvestism, with thorough bibliography.
- 55 Bowie 1993: 48.
- 56 For details on initiatory patterns in *Clouds*, see Bowie 1993: 107.
- 57 Dover 1993: 56–69 on the chorus of initiates; Lada-Richards 1999 on initiatory context of *Frogs*.
- 58 Lada-Richards 1999: 75–8 and 164–8 on ritual nudity and disguise, respectively; she later contrasts this with theatrical impersonation (168–72) at which Dionysus fails.
- 59 For an analysis of the symposium scenes in *Wasps*, see Pütz 2007: 83–103.
- 60 On self-assertion and the comic hero, see Whitman 1964.
- 61 Purves 1997 argues for a development in Philocleon from spectator to actor to chorus member, in which role he “not only finds a compromise between acting and spectating, he also celebrates his identity as a citizen.” Slater (2002: 108) also emphasizes that Philocleon is converted “into a democratic performer, that is, into a rejuvenated choral performer.” Biles 2011: 165 offers a slightly different interpretation – namely, that Philocleon “almost embodies Cratinus” at the end of the play, which Biles has argued is modeled after Cratinus’s *Pytine*. The passage in question contains other theatrical references as well: Philocleon is said to have compared one of the participants to the tragic poet Sthenelus shorn of his stage props (1313); he accuses another participant of “comedy licking” (κωμωδολοιχῶν, 1318; presumably “brown-nosing”) whoever is powerful at the moment.
- 62 The rottenness of his “rope” indicates that it is not ithyphallic.
- 63 MacCary 1979. On the ending of the play, see MacDowell 1971 ad loc., Vaio 1971: 344–51.
- 64 Biles 2011: 163–5.
- 65 This section on *Assemblywomen* was previously published in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (Compton-Engle 2005).
- 66 The *himatia* have figured, but only in passing, in several interpretations of *Assemblywomen* that emphasize performance and/or gender: Said 1979, 1987; Taaffe 1993; Slater 1997; and Zeitlin 1999.
- 67 ὑποδεῖσθε δ’ ὡς τάχιστα τὰς Λακωνικάς, / ὥσπερ τὸν ἄνδρ’ ἐθεᾶσθ’, ὅτ’ εἰς ἐκκλησίαν / μέλλοι βαδίζειν ἢ θύραζ’ ἐκάστοτε. As the women exit the stage and when they return, the clomping of their heavy boots creates comic incongruity (279–310, 483–503); Stone 1981: 226.
- 68 The secrecy and deception of the women’s plan, as evidenced by words like λαθεῖν (26), παρερπύσσασα (511), and σιωπῇ (527), are emphasized by Rothwell 1990: 47–8 and Taaffe 1993: 108.
- 69 For λαμβάνω in a cloak-stealing context, cf. Dem. 54.9 οὔτοι δ’ ὄχοντο θοιμάτιον λαβόντες μου.
- 70 Clothing thieves are frequently included in catalogs of criminal activity in a wide variety of authors, e.g., *Thesm.* 817, *Frogs* 772, *Wealth* 165; Diph. fr. 31.14; Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.62; Plato *Rep.* 575b; Arist. *EN* 1122a7, *Ath. Pol.* 52.1; Dem. 4.47; Aeschin. 1.91.
- 71 Cohen 1983: 80–1, dismissing the view that *lopodusia* could also refer to highway robbery more generally.
- 72 Cohen 1983: 81–2.

- 73 On execution as the penalty for *lopodutai* caught in the act, cf. Lysias 13.68.1; Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.62; Plato, *Laws* 874c1; Ar. *Ath. Pol.* 52.1; further passages cited at Cohen 1983: 80.
- 74 On the use of comedy in rhetoric, see Halliwell 1991; Harding 1994; Hall 1995: 56–7; and Porter 1997.
- 75 For details on this Orestes, see Dunbar 1995 on *Birds* 712 and 1490–3.
- 76 Cf. also Alexis fr. 78.
- 77 Cf. Dem. 24.114 on theft from gymnasia; Arist. *Pr.* 952a16–35 on pilfering from public places, especially baths.
- 78 Arist. *Pol.* 1267a4; cf. *Ass.* 667–71.
- 79 Saïd 1979: 38, 1987: 234–5; Taaffé 1993: 113; and Slater 1997: 107 all note the ridicule brought upon Blepyrus by his female costume. Slater observes, “The sexual inversion of the new state is thus demonstrated even before it is proclaimed.”
- 80 Olson 1989 argues persuasively that Praxagora enters at 504 carrying her disguise and returns it inside the house at 514–16; Blepyrus puts on his cloak and shoes (albeit hastily) by the time he reappears at 520.
- 81 Cf. ἀποδύω at *Birds* 712, *Frogs* 715–16, *Ass.* 667–71. The orators use ἀποδύω (Lys. 10.10), περιδύω (Antiphon 2.2.5), and ἐκδύω (Antiphon 2.2.5; Lys. 10.10, 11.5; Dem. 24) when describing muggings.
- 82 *Ass.* 312, 314, 321, 375, 526, 528. This repeated reference to the night time-frame is evidence against the possibility (Slater 1997: 98–9) that the predawn setting and the use of the lamp in the prologue were a last-minute addition after Aristophanes learned the order of the play’s performance.
- 83 Both Antiphon 2.2.5 and Dem. 54, though tendentious, rest on the assumption that the mugging victim’s life could be in danger.
- 84 There has also been a change in the type of garment involved. In the previous lines, the female clothing worn by Blepyrus was called a ἡμιδιπλοῖδιον (318), a κροκωτίδιον (332), and a χιτῶνιον (374), all inner garments, while the ἔγκυκλον mentioned here (536) is an outer garment. The reason for this inconsistency is probably pragmatic: the garb that Blepyrus wears onstage must be as feminine as possible to heighten the humor, hence the yellow undergarment; but an outer mantle is most appropriate for tossing over a sleeping person, since it is just a rectangular piece of cloth. See Ussher 1986 on 535–8. The significance is not the particular garment itself, but the fact that she has taken his male item of clothing and given him her female one instead.
- 85 Soph. *Ajax* 915–16: οὗτοι θεατός· ἀλλὰ νιν περιπτυχεῖ / φάρει καλύψω τῷδε παμπήδην (He must not be viewed; but I will cover him entirely with this enfolding shroud).
- 86 Sommerstein 1998: 185 notes the continued equation between male disempowerment and death throughout the play. See also Henderson 1972 and Slater 1989b on *lekkythoi*.
- Interpreters have given various answers to the question of how exactly Blepyrus resembles a corpse. My view is an extension of Ussher’s statement (1986: 149) that Blepyrus is corpse-like because he “is lying on his back and covered with a garment.” I would argue that both the *lopodusia* motif and the wife’s act of covering contribute to the corpse image. The association between stripping and death may be strengthened by the parallels from epic, where defeated warriors are robbed of their armor (Bassi 1998: 99–101, 125); ἀποδύω is sometimes the verb employed there, too (e.g., *Il.* 4.532, 18.82–3). Sommerstein 1998: 185 suggests that Blepyrus is like a dead man because Praxagora has been “ignoring his existence as a person.” Rothwell 1990: 57 plausibly sees an allusion to impotence, paralleled by the experience of the young man at the end of the play.
- 87 Saïd 1987: 234; Taaffé 1993: 187–8 n. 33.
- 88 Observed by MacDowell 1995: 311: “The first man the audience sees has lost his clothes to his wife; and that, metaphorically, is what the play is about – the men losing their assets to the women.”
- 89 *Ass.* 544–6: ἵνα θοιμάτιον σώσωμαι, μεθυπεδησάμην/ μιμουμένη σὲ καὶ κτυποῦσα τοῖν ποδοῖν/ καὶ τοὺς λίθους παίουσα τῇ βακτηρίᾳ. It is clear (*pace* Taaffé 1993: 121, who seems to interpret ἵνα θοιμάτιον σώσωμαι as meaning “to keep the cloak clean”) that Praxagora

- refers to actions intended to deter would-be attackers (Ussher 1986 and Sommerstein 1998 ad loc.). For a club as antitheft device, cf. *Frogs* 715–17.
- 90 Dem. 58.65 mentions people who stay inside at night to avoid suffering harm out on the streets.
- 91 Foley 1982; see also Saïd 1979 and Rothwell 1990: 16–17.
- 92 Rothwell 1990: 55–60 details Praxagora’s persuasive conversion of Blepyrus in the *agon*.
- 93 On poverty in this play, see Saïd 1979: 49–50; David 1984: 5–20; Sommerstein 1984, 1998: 177. While both Rothwell 1990: 12 and MacDowell 1995: 313–14 believe that critics have overstated the extent of poverty evidenced in *Assemblywomen*, neither disputes that economic issues are central to Praxagora’s agenda.
- 94 It should be noted that, as Stone 1981: 144–6 has shown, *gymnos* in Aristophanes can indicate either complete nudity or merely the absence of a *himation*.
- 95 We do not know anything about this Euaeon, and it has been suggested (e.g., Ussher 1986 ad loc.) that the name was chosen for its irony (“Good Lifetime” for a pathetic beggar). It is tantalizing, however, that the name is attested for a son of Aeschylus (*PA* 5255, likely the same person as *PA* 5252), who, like his brother Euphorion, seems to have followed in his father’s footsteps as a tragedian. While it is hard to imagine that same Euaeon from the middle of the fifth century still alive in the late 390s or early 380s, our Euaeon could plausibly be a later descendant of the same family, some of whose members were active fourth-century tragedians. (See family tree at *TrGF* 1: 88.) If he were a poet, he would belong to a long literary tradition (discussed by Hays 1994) of poets begging for clothing, from Hipponax to the shivering poet in *Birds*. For lack of evidence, though, this must remain in the realm of pure speculation.
- 96 Blepyrus’s neighbor states explicitly that the missing *himation* is the only one he had (353); while this does not necessarily mean that he is poor (MacDowell 1995: 310), it does mean that he currently has no cloak.
- 97 Henderson 1987b: 118–19; Slater 1989b; Sommerstein 1998: 21–2 and 185.
- 98 Henderson 1987b: 119. Whether the comic or the nightmarish is more strongly felt in the old hags scene must surely depend on the age and sex of the viewer. For divergent interpretations of this scene, see Saïd 1979: 60; Sommerstein 1984; Slater 1997: 119–21; and Halliwell 2002.
- 99 Groton 1990. See Revermann 2006: 261–95 on aspects of the staging.
- The fact that shoes play so small a role in this play (except in the informer scene), in contrast with *Assemblywomen* and especially *Wasps*, can be explained in several ways. First of all, garlands have taken the place of shoes as the costume partner that accompanies the *himation* or *tribon*. Furthermore, since this play has little to do with the relationship of the household and public institutions, the particular valence of shoes has less import here.
- 100 On the play’s approach to economic problems, see Konstan and Dillon 1981; Olson 1990.
- 101 Groton 1990.
- 102 Compton-Engle 2013.
- 103 ῥυπτῶντα, κυφόν, ἄθλιον, ῥυσόν, μαδῶντα, νωδόν, 266.
- 104 οἶμαι δὲ νῆ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ψωλὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι, 267. The meaning of ψωλός is difficult to determine. Henderson 1991: 105 translates ψωλός here as “all hard-on,” but as Sommerstein 2001 ad loc. notes, the notion of sexual excitement is out of place in the description of a decrepit old man. Another possibility, circumcision, also seems irrelevant here. Sommerstein (2001: 153) suggests that Wealth “is suffering from adhesion of the foreskin,” a condition that “would increase the risk of painful and dangerous urinary tract infections, and would end any possibility of sexual activity.” Given the specific references to other parts of Wealth’s costume in this passage, it seems unlikely that the term is one of general abuse (pace Henderson 1991: 105). I am also not convinced that οἶμαι, “I suppose,” necessarily indicates that Wealth’s phallus is not visible (Stone 1981: 121 n. 77; Sommerstein 2001: 152).
- 105 Given his pathetic appearance, it seems likely that Wealth does not wear the robust padding of a comic character, but this remains conjecture.

- 106 Revermann 2006: 262–3 on “visual incongruence” at the start of *Wealth*.
- 107 ἄθλιος and its compounds appear 162 times in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Sophocles uses it at a much higher rate in his Oedipus plays (eleven times in *OC*, nine times in *OT*) than in his other plays.
- 108 *Ach.* 412–13, 415, 432, 433, 438, *Thesm.* 910, *Frogs* 842, 1063–4; Aesch. *Pers.* 124, 835–6, *Ch.* 28–9; Soph. *Phil.* 273–4, *OC* 1597; Eur. *El.* 184–5, 501, *Hel.* 420–4, *Tr.* 496–97. Rau 1967: 31.
- 109 *OC* 555–6: σκευή τε γάρ σε καὶ τὸ δύστηνον κάρα δηλοῦτον ἡμῖν ὄνθ’ ὅς εἰ. Cf. *OC* 1258–61.
- 110 For lameness of Euripidean heroes, cf. *Ach.* 411, 427–9, *Peace* 146–4, *Frogs* 846.
- 111 See Compton-Engle 2013 for further argument that *Wealth* is initially intended to be misidentified as Oedipus.
- 112 For wreaths worn by tragic suppliants, see Groton 1990: 17–18, who cites Soph. *OT* 3; Aesch. *Supp.* 241–42, 334; Eur. *Suppl.* 10, 102. Rau 1967: 160–2 on parallels with Euripidean scenes involving Apollo’s oracle.
- 113 ἴσως Ἐρινὺς ἐστὶν ἐκ τραγῳδίας βλέπει γέ τοι μανικὸν τι καὶ τραγωδικόν, 423–4. On Poverty as a representative of tragedy in this scene, see Sfyroeras 1995: 242–7.
- 114 Reading ὥχρᾱ at 422. Sfyroeras 1995: 242–3. Cantarella 1965 argues that the depiction of Penia in *Wealth* is inspired by the recently revived Aeschylean *Oresteia*. But there are enough other tragic Furies to make this identification inconclusive. For example, the grove of the Eumenides is the setting for Soph. *OC*, and the scholia to *Wealth* 423 suggest Eur. *Or.* as a source. Taplin 2007: esp. 40–1 discusses Furies in southern Italian vase paintings; half of them are from Orestes scenes.
- 115 Sfyroeras 1995: 242–7; also Olson 1990: 235.
- 116 Sfyroeras 1995: 244 notes the parallel with *Frogs* 1009–10.
- 117 Some interpreters have found Poverty’s arguments convincing enough to make them favor an ironic reading of the play. But because this is comedy and Poverty is an ugly, scary, tragic female, we know she is destined to lose. McGlew 1997: 39 emphasizes that Poverty’s appearance alone dictates that she could not possibly be right.
- 118 Rau 1967: 166–7.
- 119 New clothes: *OC* 1597 (Oedipus loses his dirty old clothes), 1603 ἐσθητὶ τ’ ἐξήσκησαν ἥ νομίζεται, *Wealth* 625 αὐτόν τ’ ἄγειν τὸν Πλούτον, ὡς νομίζεται (interpreted by Sommerstein 2001 ad loc. as “in the customary garb”); washing: *OC* 1598, 1602, *Wealth* 657–8.
- Had we more of Sophocles’ treatment of the Phineus story, we might find further parallels there; the most important surviving fragment (fr. 710, quoted at *Wealth* 634–6) indicates that either Phineus or one of his sons had sight restored.
- 120 Stone 1981: 403–4. The old clothes were abandoned prior to his incubation, and there is no reason to think that he put them back on again.
- 121 This scene presents a temporal displacement of the cloak stripping (since it occurs in daylight rather than at night), just as the alleged *lopodusia* in *Assemblywomen* involves a spatial dislocation (since it takes place in the house rather than on the streets).
- 122 In his linguistic study of *Wealth*, Willi 2003: 63–5 observes that terms of abuse indicating property violations (τοιχωρύχος, ἱερόσυλος) replace terms indicating violation of social taboo (e.g., ἀναίσχυντος or κατὰπύγων). Willi takes this lexical shift as evidence for a broader shift in mentality from social to economic.

4. DISGUISE, GENDER, AND THE POET

- 1 This chapter is a lightly revised version of a previously published article, Compton-Engle 2003. Some citations have been updated and the section on the St. Agata vase has been added.
- 2 See Chapter 1 note 22 on this vase. Green 2014a: 347–9 suggests that a Corinthian terracotta figurine of a woman leaning forward holding a skyphos may also reflect this scene from *Women at the Thesmophoria*.

- 3 Green 1994: 66 (with photograph) follows Nieswandt 1984: 159–60 in suggesting that this represents a later comedy, perhaps influenced by *Acharnians*, that somehow involved a Telephus scene. Csapo 1994: 53 argues that “the gutti reproduce Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* directly, not some derivative parody.” See also Pöhlmann 1998: 385–6 on this scene.
- 4 The vase (*PhV*² 22, once Berlin F 3046), dated by Trendall to c. 375–350, was first published in 1849 by Panofka, who identified the scene with *Frogs*; skeptics soon argued forcefully against this identification, and then the vase was lost or destroyed during the war. Taplin 1993: 45–7 revisits the issue and leans toward identification with *Frogs*.
- 5 A remarkable addition to the small subset of comic vase paintings that are related to tragic parody is a Lucanian bell-krater (University of Sydney, Nicholson Museum 2013.2), first published in Green 2014b and dated by him to around 400. The scene shows two female comic figures: a coarse-looking one on the left with hand extended toward the more elegant-looking one on the right, who is leaning on a bed with her arm against her forehead. Green argues that it represents a comic parody of Phaedra and her nurse from Euripides’ *Hippolytus* and that the most likely author of the parody is Aristophanes. Further discussion of this vase in future years is sure to enhance our understanding of both the staging and the reception of the Euripidean original, as well as the nature of the comic parody.
- 6 Sfyroeras 2008 argues for a connection between *Women at the Thesmophoria* and *Frogs*; he suggests that at *Frogs* 52–4, when Dionysus says that while reading *Andromeda* he was struck with longing for Euripides, an intertextual reference is intended to the parody of *Andromeda* in *Women at the Thesmophoria*.
- 7 Duncan 2006: 32–47; quotation from p. 33.
- 8 For mastery as a characteristic of Dicaeopolis, see Whitman 1964: 59–80.
- 9 On *Telephus* and the parody of it in *Acharnians*, the most important works are Handley and Rea 1957; Rau 1967; Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995 (with further bibliography). Slater 1993: 400 notes that putting on and stripping costume are a “major theme in this play.”
- 10 On the significance of Euripides’ rags, see Macleod 1974. The escalation from reasonable to outrageous demands finds parallels with other comic begging scenes. For the list of mundane items, cf. Hipponax fr. 32 W (cf. also 34 W), where the speaker begins with a reasonable request for a *chlaina*, but continues to demand more things (fr. 32 W 3–5). Cf. also the Lamachus scene at *Ach.* 572–625, discussed later in this chapter. In Menander’s *Dyskolos* (910–31) there is a similar scene, in which Getas and Sicon try to get Cnemon out of the house by knocking on the door and asking for a series of extravagant supplies needed for their party.
- 11 Reckford 1987: 179; Foley 1988: 40.
- 12 *Tel.* fr. 698. See Rau 1967: 33 on this fragment.
- 13 Henderson 1991: 213 on the gesture, which “meant, as it still does, that the recipient of the gesture was a pathetic.”
- 14 See Slater 1993: 408–9 on the stripping of Lamachus. Slater also connects the chorus’s stripping in preparation for the parabasis (627) with Lamachus’s “divestment.” Olson 2002: lxvii and 222 points out that the visual contrast here between the ostentatiously dressed Lamachus and the humbly attired Dicaeopolis is part of a pattern in which the characters confronted by Dicaeopolis are more extravagantly dressed than he is.
- 15 εἰ δ’ ἰσχυρὸς εἶ, τί μ’ οὐκ ἀπεψώλησας; εὖοπλος γὰρ εἶ.
- 16 For ἀποψώλλω cf. *Ach.* 161–2. Sommerstein 1980: 185 and Henderson 1991: 110 suggest a double meaning, “circumcise me” and “excite me sexually.” Olson 2002 ad loc. concurs.
- 17 Slater 1993: 412; see also Harriott 1979; Stone 1981: 404–6; and Pellegrino 1993 on this scene.
- 18 Porter 2004.
- 19 Stone 1981: 405–6. Olson 2002: lviii and 357–8 notes that Lamachus now plays the Telephus role (ragged and limping).
- 20 δοξεῖτ’ ἡμεν in 741 also recalls δόξαι ... εἶναι spoken by Dicaeopolis at 440 in reference to his beggar disguise. The parallelism between the eunuchs and the piggies, two pairs of mute disguisers, would be further reinforced if the same pair of actors played both roles, as is probable.

- 21 See Sommerstein 1980 ad loc. for the tragic parody.
- 22 Henderson 1991: 57–62 discusses Dicaeopolis's use of obscenity “verbally to cut through all kinds of deceptions and disguises” (60).
- 23 Biles 2011: 56–96 offers the most important recent consideration of the association of Dicaeopolis with the persona of Aristophanes himself. Biles argues that *Acharnians* is structured around “a competitive paradigm shared by hero and poet” (2011: 57). Other discussions include Bowie 1982; Foley 1988; Slater 1989a; Goldhill 1991: 188–201; and Hubbard 1991: 41–53. See Olson 2002: xlv–lii for a concise assessment of the issues.
- 24 See Starkie 1909 Excursus V for a full bibliography of scholars who had taken positions (up to that time) on the question of whether it was Aristophanes or Callistratus who was prosecuted by Cleon. On the historicity of the proceedings, see Starkie 1909: 247–8; Rostagni 1927; Steffen 1954, 1956; and Carawan 1990: 138 n. 3. Rosen 1988: 63–4 suggests the possibility that the allusions to the indictment by Cleon are “one element of a fiction of hostility between them propagated by the poet.”
- 25 Bowie 1982: 30–1.
- 26 See Biles 2011: 83–94 on the parallel victories of Dicaeopolis and the poet.
- 27 The archon basileus presided over not only the Anthesteria but also the dramatic contests. Rennie 1909 ad loc.; Hubbard 1991: 58; Slater 1993: 413–14.
- 28 The *Telephus* parody may also be a signal of Aristophanes' indebtedness to Euripides' play for elements of the plot in *Acharnians* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*. Miller 1948 stresses the influence of *Telephus* throughout the first half of *Women at the Thesmophoria*; for a thorough handling of the paratragedy, see Rau 1967 and 1975.
- 29 Stehle 2002. Snyder 1974, Hansen 1976: 165–74, Muecke 1982b, and Duncan 2006: 32–47 also provide detailed analyses of the Agathon scene.
- 30 For the beard and body hair as representative of masculinity, see Stone 1981: 28–31; Saïd 1987: 227; Taaffe 1993: 83–4.
- 31 Given Agathon's nonmale body, his later assertion that one who composes male roles already has what he needs ἐν τῷ σώματι (in the body, 154) rings a bit hollow.
- 32 ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐχ ὀρῶ / ἄνδρ' οὐδ' ἐν' ἐνθάδ' ὄντα, Κυρήνην δ' ὀρῶ. Cyrene was a well-known prostitute.
- 33 Stehle 2002: 382.
- 34 Compare the deficiencies in Tereus's appearance at *Birds* 92–106.
- 35 Lines 35 and 50 have already suggested that Agathon is a pathic (and line 57 that he is a cocksucker). Duncan (2006: 41) argues that the Relative's aroused reaction to Agathon represents the seductive allure of tragedy for the audience.
- 36 Whether Agathon's ambiguous proclamations on the relationship between clothing and mimesis are to be taken seriously is unclear. Duncan (2006: 32–47) explicates the contradictions between Agathon's sometimes-essentialist and sometimes-constructivist explanations of identity and locates them in the destabilizing nature of transvestism. On the other hand, Austin and Olson (2004: 105) may have a point that “this is popular entertainment drawing on fashionable ideas, not a systematic scholarly treatise on poetics.”
- 37 Thuc. 2.4.7, 4.69.3, 7.85.1.
- 38 Stehle 2002: 386 notes the visual similarity between the singing and the Relative's proposed anal penetration of Agathon: “Euripides, singing away with a torch, is standing behind him jabbing a long, swelling, red-tipped object at his rear.”
- 39 Given the Relative's obvious discomfort and humiliation, it is hard to agree with those who see this scene as indicating that it is “easy” for men to play at being women, e.g., Ferris 1989: 28; Taaffe 1993: 85; Bobrick 1997: 181; cf. Duncan 2006: 46, who states that the Relative “embrace[s] his female role” and “proves quite comfortable with the idea of costume, disguise, impersonation, and parody.” Gruber 1986: 27 is more on target: “Mnesilochus [the Relative] is formally degraded, almost savagely so.”
- 40 There may be an allusion to the Megarian piggy scene and its double entendres when the Relative says, “I'll become a piglet!” (δελφάκιον γενήσομαι) at 237, as he is being singed; but the primary reference is to the removal of a pig's bristles (Austin and Olson 2004 ad loc.).

- 41 For the transitive use of σκευάζω, cf. *Ach.* 739 (the Megarian’s dressing up his daughters).
- 42 The breasts are a bit of a puzzle here, since male comic body padding normally included chest padding, but here at 640 the women seem to remark upon the absence of female breasts. Foley 2000: 295 proposes that the Relative puts on padded breasts with his *strophion* at 251, and that both are now stripped off at 638–40. Piqueux 2006: 138 suggests that the words of the chorus (and not any difference in the padding itself) are what differentiate comic male from female breasts and that thus the passage points to the indeterminacy of the normal padding.
- 43 Sommerstein 1994 ad loc., citing *Lys.* 1019–24 and Tyrtaeus 10.21–7 and noting that the plural (κροκωτοῖς, μίτρας) “puts extra emphasis on the disgrace, humiliation and ridicule which the Inlaw fears these clothes will bring upon him.”
- 44 Likewise, the costume determines his choice of the Helen role (850–1), rather than vice-versa (as in the case of Dicaeopolis and Telephus).
- 45 It is not clear whether Teleclides fr. 33 (ὡς οὐσα θῆλυς εἰκότως οὐθάρ φορῶ, “since I am a woman, it is reasonable that I wear an udder/breast”) is spoken by a character in transvestite disguise. See PCG for various interpretations.
- 46 Henderson 1991: 88–9; on the archer scene and Euripides’ *Andromeda*, see Gibert 1999–2000: 79–81.
- 47 Stehle 2002: 394.
- 48 Zeitlin 1996: 375–416 (prev. pub. 1981). The explosion of interest in metatheater and gender studies in the 1980s and 1990s brought a renewal of scholarly study of the once-neglected *Women at the Thesmophoria*, not only among classicists (Zeitlin 1996: 375–416; Muecke 1982b; Taaffe 1993; Bobrick 1997; McClure 1999; Gibert 1999–2000; Duncan 2006), but among scholars of theater studies (Gruber 1986; Ferris 1989).
- 49 Zeitlin 1996 (prev. pub. 1985): 363.
- 50 Zeitlin 1996: 348 n. 17.
- 51 Taaffe 1993: e.g., 20, 23–4, 28–9, 33–5.
- 52 Bassi 1998: 114.
- 53 Duncan 2006: 45 (see esp. n. 49); for other examples, see also Cairns 2002: 80 and Cawthorn 2008: 56.
- 54 There is some overlap between this thesis and that of Bobrick 1997, who focuses on the power of theatrical narratives to establish civic identity. While Bobrick’s emphasis on power and control matches mine, in my view she overstates the extent of the male characters’ power in *Women at the Thesmophoria*.
- 55 Saïd 1987: 233.
- 56 The similarities between the “toilet” scene of *Bacchae* and the dressing scene of *Women at the Thesmophoria* were noticed as early as Dodds 1960: 192. For other discussions of the comic costume dynamics in *Bacchae*, see Seidensticker 1978; Foley 1980, esp. 114–16; Segal 1982: 254–9; Muecke 1982a; Gruber 1986: 26–7; Saïd 1987: 221–3. For a comparison between tragic and comic uses of costume, see Saïd 1987.
- 57 Foley 1980: 109–14 on Dionysus’s control of stage properties.
- 58 *Ass.* 311–47. Saïd 1987: 234–5; Taaffe 1993: 113.
- 59 Taaffe 1993: 48–9; Henderson 2000: 136 dates the development of female characters in comedy to the third quarter of the fifth century.
- 60 Sommerstein 1994: 1–3 on the dates of *Lysistrata* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*; Henderson 1987a: xxviii on the paucity of major female roles before *Lysistrata*.
- 61 Hubbard 1991: 186–99 explores the intertextual relationship between the two plays.
- 62 Zeitlin 1996: 415–16 on feminization of late fifth-century tragedy; Whitman 1964: 223 (on *Thesm.*): “Comedy is virile, like Mnesilochus, and essentially truthful; tragedy is at best a hermaphroditic affair, evolving contrived but fragile structures of illusion, and simultaneously allying itself with the female and betraying it.”
- 63 Zeitlin 1996: 385–6.
- 64 Bowie 1993: 221–4. Bobrick 1997: 184–5 suggests that Critylla’s refusal to participate in the internal drama shows her to be “very dense indeed”; but Critylla is of course right not to be taken in by the attempted trickery of Euripides and the Relative.

- 65 The complexity of comic interaction with tragedy in *Women at the Thesmophoria* is well conveyed by Rau 1967, 1975; Zeitlin 1996: 375–416; and Gibert 1999–2000. While the Relative has been viewed by some (e.g., Whitman 1964: 223; Sommerstein 1994: 9) as representing the spirit of comedy, being a comic buffoon is a far cry from representing the comic poet himself.
- 66 See Hansen 1976: 181–3 and Sommerstein 1994 ad loc. on whether Euripides acts the part of Echo in lines 1056–97. Gilula 1996 argues that Echo must have been onstage to be heard, and therefore cannot be Euripides, who needs to appear as Perseus at 1098.
- 67 Apulian red-figure bell-krater, 380–370, *PhV*² 59, St. Agata dei Goti I, Rainone–Mustilli Collection. In addition to the photograph from the Trendall Centre, I am grateful for use of the detailed notes and photographs taken by Alan Hughes, who inspected this vase in its owner's living room in Sant'Agata dei Goti in 1999.
- 68 The drawing from Panofka reproduced in Taplin 1993: 84 and Revermann 2006 pl. 5 does not accurately reflect the state of preservation of the mask that the man is holding. Virtually none of its face has been preserved. Nevertheless, there is evidence of the white paint that designates a mask as female, and the mask is beardless with long curly hair.
- 69 Panofka 1847 first suggested that this vase depicts a travesty of the scene in which Antigone is brought before king Creon by the guard after she has been caught attempting to bury her brother in defiance of Creon's edict. Others (e.g., Trendall in *PhV*² and Trendall and Webster 1971 [IV.33]) followed this identification, and then Taplin 1993: 83–8 added further support to this interpretation. Walsh 2009: 221–2 tentatively identifies it as Antigone but admits the uncertainty. On the other hand, Green 2003: 127–8 and Storey 2011: 447 express skepticism. Neither the Asiatic headgear of the “Creon” figure nor the animal-skin garb of the guard can be accounted for in the extant *Antigone*.
- 70 Taplin 1993: 83–8 cites Sophocles, *Antigone* 429–31, where the guard reports that he saw Antigone pouring three libations from a bronze vessel; she could, presumably, still be carrying that vessel when brought before Creon. But Antigone is not the only jar-carrying woman of the Greek stage: Electra famously carries an urn in Sophocles and a water jar in Euripides. At Soph. *El.* 1113–26, Orestes and Pylades arrive with an urn that they say contains Orestes' ashes. Electra asks for the urn and proceeds to hold it during her long speech in lament for Orestes. Taplin 2007: 96–7 discusses a Lucanian bell-krater of c. 350 that likely depicts Orestes holding out an urn to Electra with Pylades at left. At Eur. *El.* 55–6, Electra makes her first appearance carrying a water jug on her head.
- 71 Men in Greek art do sometimes carry water jugs (e.g., on the Panathenaic frieze on the Parthenon), but women do so much more frequently. Particularly common in the late sixth century are scenes of women together fetching water from a fountain house.
- 72 Taplin 1993: 86–7 suggests that the old man has not yet put on the female mask but is being dragged off reluctantly to play that role. I think it is clear that he has already been apprehended in the act of playing a female role.
- 73 Taplin 1993: 88. Marshall 1999b: 201 n. 49 suggests that the scene comes from a play such as Aristophanes' *Proagon* that is set within the dramatic festival itself.
- 74 Compare *PhV*² 57, Ruvo 35652 (formerly 901), also an Apulian bell-krater, dated c. 400. In that scene, a central female figure has been brought to her knees by two men with daggers drawn; one of them steps on her foot in the same way as on the St. Agata vase.
- 75 Green 2003: 128 observes that the central figure wears mask type L, which typically represents “an older man who is gentle in nature, or, furthermore, the sort of man who has advantage taken of him” (130). Green also argues (2003: 128) that the mask worn by the leftmost figure, type G, characterizes him as stupid.
- 76 The old man's intended motion is clearly to the viewer's left, toward the “Creon” figure, which is a bit puzzling in the context of *Antigone*. Perhaps the point is simply that he is trying to get away from the guard, and a two-dimensional scene leaves him only one other direction to go. Nevertheless, this direction of movement does pose another problem for those who interpret the scene as an Antigone parody. Taplin 1993: 87 proposes that this presents a reversal of the Sophoclean scene, and that the Creon figure functions like Euripides in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, who has pressured his relative into playing the role.

- 77 Whitman 1964: 229–36 on lack of a transcendent hero in *Frogs*.
- 78 Henderson 1991: 91: “In no other play of Aristophanes does the obscenity remain on such a low and unessential level.”
- 79 A development in the character of Dionysus has been noted by several critics. On the education of Dionysus, the seminal work is Segal 1961, further developed by Padilla 1992; against this view, see Dover 1993: 42–3.
- 80 Much work on *Frogs* since the latter part of the twentieth century has focused on the ritual and initiatory patterns in the play: Whitman 1964: 234; Reckford 1987: 403–32; Moorton 1989; Brown 1991; Bowie 1993: 228–53; Konstan 1995; Lada-Richards 1999; Griffith 2013: 150–99.
- 81 The parallelism between the costuming of Xanthias and Dionysus would be enhanced if, as Jeff Massey has proposed (in an unpublished suggestion cited by Marshall 1999a: 146), Xanthias wears a donkey outfit on top of his slave costume. Each character would then be wearing two layers of costuming on top of the actor’s bodysuit.
- 82 Most critics hardly mention the baggage, moving quickly on to the encounter with Heracles. Forde 1993–4: 276 states what others leave unsaid: “The baggage certainly receives no use in the course of the play except as an instrument to some of its buffoonery. Aristophanes seems to introduce the baggage only as a comic device, in the vein of the ‘vulgar’ comedians.” Sommerstein 1996 is an exception in paying attention to the baggage; see his notes on lines 15, 495, and 627.
- 83 τί δῆτ’ ἔδει με ταῦτα τὰ σκεύη φέρειν, / εἴπερ ποιήσω μηδὲν ὥνπερ Φρόνιχος / εἴωθε ποιεῖν.
- 84 Whitman 1964: 235–6; Henderson 1991: 92; Dover 1993: 43–4; Sommerstein 1996: 157. Heiden 1991: 97–8 argues a slightly different interpretation, namely that this passage demonstrates that Dionysus has no sense of Old Comic humor.
- 85 The phrase ἐν τῷ μέρει is used again at the first exchange of costume in 497.
- 86 Lada-Richards 1999: 17–44 (following Loraux 1990) outlines the similarities between Dionysus and Heracles in cult and art, drawing attention to the ambiguities in each mythical character and arguing for a kind of merging of Dionysian and Heracleian elements in the play’s prologue; yet it is clear that for the scene to work as comedy, all the complexities that Lada-Richards elaborates are reduced to a simplistic comic formulation that opposes the two. Just as the caricature of Socrates in *Clouds* does not depend on the full complexity of the real Socrates, so here the two multifaceted characters from myth are reduced to cartoon figures in which Dionysus stands for wimpiness and Heracles for bravery.
- 87 For the laughter inspired by Dionysus’s outfit, compare also *Birds* 801–8 (Saïd 1987: 224). Padilla 1992: 364 notes that the chorus’s words in *Frogs* 404–8 continue the connection between clothing and laughter.
- 88 Muecke 1982b: 52–5 on Agathon’s understanding of mimesis; on the *Frogs* passage, with further bibliography on mimesis, Lada-Richards 1999: 161.
- 89 Lada-Richards 1999: 160–72 sees a tension between the ritual understanding of the effect of a mask, which possess the power to assimilate the wearer to the thing imitated, and the dramatic function of a mask, which grants only the potentiality of acquiring a new identity – the actor must do the rest. Dionysus, in the view of Lada-Richards, has a “misplaced ritual attitude to his dramatic garb” (172). Likewise in *Wasps*, Philocleon is not able to change his rustic nature by putting on sophisticated attire; see Saïd 1987: 225.
- 90 On the Empousa encounter as parallel to a stage in the mysteries, see Brown 1991; Lada-Richards 1999: 71 and 90–4.
- 91 The luggage is called σκεύη at 12, 15, 521, and 627; cf. also 172 and 497. The Heracles costume is called σκευή at 108; cf. (ἐ)νεσκεύασα at 523. Taplin 1993: 68–9.
- 92 Marshall 1993 offers a detailed analysis of the “status transactions” in this scene. See also Stone 1981: 419–21, who conjectures that a *tribon* originally worn by Xanthias is also part of the exchange.
- 93 Whitman 1964: 237–9; Dover 1993: 43–50; Marshall 1993: 60; Konstan 1995: 70–1.

- 94 Konstan 1995: 67–8; Lada-Richards 1999: 67–8, 75–8.
- 95 My position stands in contrast with the view of Lada-Richards (1999: 176), who sees Dionysus's attempt at role-playing as “an important avenue for his reintegration into the community of the Athenian *polis*,” and suggests that “the discarding of Heracles’ *skeue* estranges Dionysus, the actor, from a bestial and uncivilized mode of being.” A similarly positive development, albeit through a conversion to rather than alienation from Heracleian values, has been delineated by Padilla 1992. Biles 2011: 212–19 argues that Dionysus serves as a representative of the Athenian audience throughout the play.
- 96 Henderson 1991: 91–2 and Heiden 1991: 99 note Dionysus's buffoonery.
- 97 Heiden 1991: 100–1 sees similarities in the way Dionysus and Aeschylus view the functioning of costuming and mimesis.
- 98 Cf. particularly 1169, 1411–13, 1444–5.
- 99 Heiden 1991 discusses Dionysus's antipathy toward comedy in *Frogs* and the surprising silence about comedy throughout the play.

5. ANIMAL COSTUMES AND CHORAL SPECTACLE

- 1 Major treatments of this set of vases are in Green 1985 (with photographs); Rusten 2006: 44–54; and Rothwell 2007: 36–80. Osborne 2008: 397–406 offers a skeptical view of “pre-dramatic” vases. A few are discussed within the wider context of depictions of drama in the fifth and early fourth centuries by Förtsch 1997. For a lucid analysis of early influences on comedy in particular, see Rusten 2006; for a summary of the status of the question of drama's origins, see Csapo and Miller 2007: 1–38; for a summary of the relationship of costume to these questions, see Stone 1981: 446–52.
- 2 Rothwell 2007: 9–12, 28–30 discusses additional types of costumed “otherness,” such as the wearing of foreign attire, that are occasionally represented in symposiastic contexts. One Attic black-figure skyphos (Athenian Agora P32413, Rothwell fig. 1.1.) shows two participants at a symposium sporting strange headgear – one with animal ears and horns, the other with what appear to be antlers. Similar animal headdresses are also worn by the choruses of two choral vases dated to c. 560–550 (black-figure Siana cup, Amsterdam 3356: Table 1 no. 1; black-figure hydria, Metropolitan Museum 1988.11.3: Table 1 no. 2) and by the riders on the Berlin Knights amphora (Figure 23).
- 3 Attic black-figure amphora, c. 540–530, Berlin, Staatliche Museum F 1697: Table 1 no. 3.
- 4 Attic black-figure skyphos, c. 490–480, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 20.18: Table 1 no. 17.
- 5 On the choreography implied in these depictions, see Hedreen 2013. This synchronization stands in contrast to the individualized postures of the so-called Corinthian padded dancers of the seventh and sixth centuries (on which see Chapter 2 note 11).
- 6 Attic red-figure psykter, c. 510, New York, Metropolitan Museum 1989.281.69: Table 1 no. 6. Note also the letters inscribed on the Berlin amphora (though only once, not from each rider's mouth), apparently ancient Greek for “giddy-up.”
- 7 Pütz 2007: 121–3 distinguishes between the wilder private *komos* (when a symposium takes to the streets) and the more sedate officially organized kind (such as those at religious festivals). The scenes depicted on these vases clearly belong to the latter category. Csapo 2013: 60–4, part of an essay on the phallus bearers of the Dionysia, is keen to stress that the archaic *pompe* that was part of the Dionysia was less dignified than we might at first assume. For a brief summary of the issues surrounding the *komos* and the origins of comedy, see Pütz 2007: 123–8. Csapo 2010: 11 argues that the presence of dolphins on many of the so-called *komos* vases confirms the Dionysiac context. Cf. also Csapo 2003.
- 8 The one exception is the additional small figure, wrapped in a mantle, who stands between the *auletes* and ostrich riders on the Boston skyphos (Figure 25). Sifakis 1971: 91–3 discusses the various attempts to identify this figure. Hughes 2012: 109 sees him as a possible actor.

- 9 Csapo 2003 and Rusten 2006: 44–54. Kowalzig 2013 and Hedreen 2013 both discuss the vases in the context of dithyramb. In the latest model proposed, Csapo 2013: 65–6 envisions in the early years of the Dionysia “a generic Dionysian choral form, ‘*komos*’, of two main varieties, dithyrambic choruses and *phallika*, each with subvarieties: animal-rider (or beast) choruses and satyrs for the former; *phallophoroi* and *ithyphalloi* for the latter.”
- 10 Wilson 2000: 11–49 on the festivals and events for which choruses were needed.
- 11 Csapo 2010: 30–1; Wilson 2000: 198–264 offers an extensive discussion of choregic monuments, including depictions in pottery.
- 12 Csapo 2013: 66–7.
- 13 Csapo 2003: 88 notes that what appears processional on a two-dimensional photograph may better be described as circular when the vessel is viewed in its three dimensions. Rothwell 2007: 79–80, noting that these animal-chorus vases disappear just after comedy is institutionalized in the City Dionysia, suggests that perhaps their function within the aristocratic milieu of the symposium was appropriated by the demos for comic performance. See also Rusten 2006: 56–8 on the political implications of the establishment of comedy.
- 14 Wilson 2000: 86–9 suggests that of the materials for performance supplied by the *choregos*, the costumes of the chorus members must have been the most important and expensive. Though data are scarce, Wilson (2000: 92–4) supplies evidence suggesting that while a tragic *choregia* with its four plays was the most expensive, the “per-choreut” expense of tragedy and comedy was nearly identical.
- 15 Wilson 2000: 86: “The *khoregos*’ special association with this dominant visual element of drama is all of a part with the highly visual and performative quality of his own appearance before the public in the theatre in special robes of his own, ‘leading his *khoros*.’”
- 16 Green 2007b: 104.
- 17 See Sifakis 1971: 86–8 and Hughes 2012: 87 on the choral *himatia*.
- 18 Attic black-figure amphora, c. 480, Berlin, Staatliche Museum F 1830: Table 1 no. 19.
- 19 Black-figure skyphos, c. 480, Thebes B.E. 64.342: Table 1 no. 18.
- 20 Green 1985: 102.
- 21 Black-figure skyphos, c. 500, Pulsano, Guarini Collection 48: Table 1 no. 9; black-figure amphora, c. 490, Brooklyn Museum 09.35: Table 1 no. 11; black-figure oinochoe, Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum L 344: Table 1 no. 12. “It is almost as if they were exclaiming about the nature of their dress” (Green 1985: 108).
- 22 Cloaked dolphin riders include: black-figure kylix, L.A., Dechter Collection: Table 1 no. 8; black-figure lekythos, Athens Kerameikos Inv. 1486: Table 1 no. 13; black-figure lekythos, Palermo CAT 2816: Table 1 no. 14; black-figure cup fragment, Basel, H. A. Cahn Collection, 849: Table 1 no. 15; and black-figure skyphos, Boston 20.18, with cloaked ostrich-riders on the reverse (Figures 24 and 25): Table 1 no. 17. *Himatia* are missing from the dolphin riders on a black-figure cup from c. 490–480 (Paris, Louvre CA 1924: Table 1 no. 16) and New York psykter (Figure 26, Table 1 no. 6).
- 23 Kowalzig 2013: 38–43. The *chlamys* worn by the dolphin rider on the black-figure kylix in the Dechter Collection in Los Angeles (Table 1 no. 8) could make some sense as a cavalry outfit, but the others are wearing full *himatia*, very clumsy on either horse or dolphin.
- 24 Note also the Boeotian figurine from Tanagra (Paris, Louvre MNB 3017, c. 500–475) that depicts a warrior riding a legged dolphin. Jeammet in Hart 2010: 26 (with photograph) argues that the two sets of legs on the figure suggest a theatrical costume.
- 25 Csapo 2003; Kowalzig 2013.
- 26 Rothwell 2007: 16 resists seeing Dionysian imagery in all animal choruses: “It requires a leap of faith to trace our animal choruses back to a specifically Dionysiac source. A primary reservation is that the animals that appear in animal choruses are rarely the ones we find associated with Dionysus in art or literature.”
- 27 Attic black-figure oinochoe, c. 500–490, London, British Museum 1842,0728.787 (B 509): Table 1 no. 10.

- 28 Attic red-figure calyx-krater, c. 440–430, Naples, Museo Nazionale 205239 (formerly Malibu 82.AE.83): [Table 1](#) no. 21.
- 29 Attic red-figured pelike, c. 425, Atlanta, Michael C. Carlos Museum 2008.4.1: [Table 1](#) no. 22.
- 30 Rothwell 2007: 207–9.
- 31 Taplin 1987: 92–6; Revermann 2006: 217–19; Rothwell 2007: 57–8, 81–101 on resemblance to satyrs. Froning 2009 argues that the vase depicts the chorus of a satyr play, not a comedy.
- 32 Green 1985.
- 33 Taplin 1993: 101–4. See also Schmidt 1998: 19–22 on this vase.
- 34 Csapo 2010: 33 n. 34. Froning 2009: 116 estimates a date of c. 440–430 on stylistic grounds.
- 35 Rothwell 2007: 187–206 offers a useful compilation of comic fragments related to animal choruses, including both text and translation.
- 36 For choruses of dancing old men, see the fragmentary red-figure oinochoe, c. 380–360, Athens, Benaki Museum 30890; and the fragments of two Attic reliefs (Athens, Agora S 1025 and 1586, Agora S 2098), dating to the mid-fourth century ([Figures 3](#) and [4](#)).
- 37 Wilson 2000: 67–8 cites evidence that the match between *choregos* and poet was made by lot, but he also suggests that the *choregos* may have been allotted not a particular poet but a particular order of choice in the selection of poets.
- 38 See Revermann 2006: 198–203 on the arrival of the cloud chorus.
- 39 Because the chorus members are all purportedly female (though played by males), in this case the actors’ commentary takes on the ogling, sexually suggestive attitude that we have seen them adopt toward other female characters (fr. 223): “Hey Philinus, why are you looking at her? Won’t you just drop off to some colony?” (ὁ Φιλῖνος οὗτος, τί ἄρα πρὸς ταύτην βλέπεις; / οὐκ ἀπολιβάξεις εἰς ἀποικίαν τινά;). Rosen 1997 explores the implications for Athenian political and sexual ideology of this play’s female chorus representing subject states.
- 40 (A) Τῆνος αὐτή. (B) πολλοὺς ἔχουσα σκορπίους ἔχεις τε συκοφάντας. Here I follow the text of Olson 2007: 74.
- 41 αὐτή Χίος, καλὴ πόλις < > / πέμπει γὰρ ὑμῖν ναῦς μακρὰς ἄνδρας θ’ ὅταν δεήσῃ, / καὶ τᾶλλα πειθαρχεῖ καλῶς, ἀπληκτος ὥσπερ ἵππος.
- 42 ἢ δ’ ὑστάτη ποῦ ‘σθ’; ἦδε Κύζικος πλέα στατήρων.
- 43 Wilson 1977: 278 suggests that some of the plays with generic animal-chorus titles, such as *Beasts* or *Fishes*, might have had individualized choruses: “One would find it unsatisfactory if a chorus of ‘beasts’ turned out to contain only sheep.” Another individualized chorus may have appeared in Ameipsias’s *Konnos*, where some of the sages in the chorus seem to have been differentiated.
- 44 Revermann 2006: 65.
- 45 Stone 1981: 379. Sommerstein 1981: 4 comes to the opposite conclusion, that the knights are not mounted.
- 46 The anthropomorphism is noted by Rothwell 2007: 142–4.
- 47 Allison 1983 presents the fullest argument for invisible frogs.
- 48 Marshall 1996: 261, followed by Revermann 2006: 64–5 and Rothwell 2007: 136–7. Dover 1993: 56–7 comes to a similar conclusion, as does Sommerstein 1996: 175–6. Dover and Marshall both effectively refute the argument that a lack of funds would have prompted an invisible chorus.
- 49 Revermann 2006: 65 suggests that the scholiast, writing centuries later, may have been influenced by a later reproduction that did not have a visible frog chorus.
- 50 Compare the women in the chorus at *Ass.* 275–6, instructed by Praxagora to hitch up their *himatia* before they proceed to the assembly.
- 51 Zielinski 1885: 186; see the summaries of previous scholarship by Sifakis 1971: 106–8 and Stone 1981: 424–8.
- 52 Hubbard 1991: 18.

- 53 For example, in the parabasis of *Wasps* (1071–3; cp. 1102–3), the chorus members refer to their appearance and specifically to items of costume like their wasp-waistedness and their stingers. Likewise the birds' elaboration on the benefits of wings in the *Birds* parabasis relies on the physical elements of their costume. Hubbard 1991: 19–20.
- 54 Stone 1981: 428; Ketterer 1980. This notion is also proposed in the scholia.
- 55 Ketterer 1980 considers the *Acharnians* passage and argues that the removal of the *tribones* is necessary so that the rhetorical gestures of the chorus members' arms can be visible to the audience.
- 56 Bierl 2009: 55 notes that this conspicuous spectacle sets the comic chorus apart from the tragic one: "Contrary to tragedy, where the chorus tends to be made up of inconspicuous participants in the plot, such as old men or female bystanders, and therefore fairly straightforward and predictable in terms of its role, the choruses of Old Comedy represent a considerable surprise and the central performative event for the audience." The chorus of the *Eumenides* provides a notable exception, as Bierl is aware.
- 57 For the skyphos depicting old men dancing with and without *himatia*, see note 19 in this chapter. For the *Wasps*, see the final discussion in this section.
- 58 A similar hybridity is suggested by the title of Pherecrates' Μυρμηκάνθρωποι (*Ant-Men*).
- 59 See Rothwell 2007: 108–17 on the chorus of *Wasps*.
- 60 The wasp metaphor is kept alive with 241 σίμβλον (hive), and the chorus calls Philocleon μέλιττιον (little bee) at 366.
- 61 Henderson 1999: 359 suggests that the line indicates their phalluses.
- 62 μηδὲν Ἀττικοῦ καλεῖσθαι σφηκὸς ἀνδρικώτερον, 1090. At *Wasps* 1102–21 there is more about the chorus's resemblance to wasps.
- 63 See Chapter 3 on youth and old age; Rothwell 1995 on animal fable in *Wasps*.
- 64 Some of the arguments made in this section can also be found at Compton-Engle 2007.
- 65 This extravagance applies to props as well. According to English 2000: 150 n. 5, *Birds* is second only to *Acharnians* in the number of props needed for the performance.
- 66 The proliferation of animal costumes beyond the chorus also raises interesting practical questions about the degree of the material support that the *choregos* for this play offered for the costuming of characters who were not strictly choral. Wilson 2000: 87 suggests that a "zeal for victory" might spur an ambitious *choregos* to go beyond the strict requirements of his position.
- 67 The birds on the Naples vase (Figure 30) sport crests, beaks, wings, body plumage, and spurs (along with erect phalluses and tails); the London birds (Figure 29) have all these but beaks (assuming that the protrusions at their knees represent spurs; they could also be feet). Cockscombs and wattles are the only things visible on the two cock figures on the Berlin birds (Figure 27), where the remainder of the costume is concealed by tightly wrapped *himatia*.
- 68 Hubbard 1991: 181. Whitman 1964: 172–99 makes a sustained case for the primacy of language in *Birds*: "The *Birds* plays with language in a way far beyond any of the other comedies, and the sense of reality undergoes considerable change by consequence.... The word is all, it creates consciousness, and its enormous vitality stubbornly resists fact (172).... The airy empire of the birds is created out of words by that demiurge of persuasion, Peithetaerus, in a vast 'subjective restructuring of the world' which is both lyrical and ironic (174)." Echoes of Whitman's view can be felt in Arrowsmith 1973: 144: "The fantasy-city is created by the sheer power of speech, fired by a fatal *eros* for conquest." Cf. Dobrov 1997: 100: "the prologue and Great Idea of *Birds* are essentially displays of the creative power of language." While acknowledging the effectiveness of the references to costume, Dobrov speaks of "Aristophanes' choice to foreground textuality in this play" (102).
- 69 Compare Worman 1999, who in a study of Euripides' *Heracles* examines "an interplay between figurative imagery ... and the concrete details to which the text refers: the costumes, props and use of space that identify the narrative setting and orient the spectator's eye" (90). Slater 2002: 132–49 has already offered an extensive analysis of the conception of place in *Birds*.

- 70 On the representation of the guide birds, see Stone 1981: 353 and Dunbar 1995: 130. Fake birds with obvious, even oversized, bills would enhance the visual effect of the opening scene and would offer better parallels with later bird characters. The only difficulty with the use of artificial birds is how they would fly away, as they are said to have done by lines 86–91. It is conceivable, though, that in the slapstick action that follows the servant bird's appearance, violent gesticulation could have flung them off to the side, to be picked up by stagehands or the like. It is hard to believe that a pantomime, as suggested by Arnott 1959: 179, would effectively convey the birds' gaping and biting, or that real birds could be counted on to do the right thing on cue (gape in the correct direction at 20, 49–51, croak at 23–4, keep quiet the rest of the time, then fly away).
- 71 Cf. *Knights* 1057, *Wasps* 625–7, *Frogs* 308, 479–90. No mention is made of a crest, wings, or spurs, so either the servant bird does not wear them or they are not deemed important enough to merit comment. In either case, anything else this strange bird may be wearing is of no consequence in comparison with his beak.
- 72 Green 1985: 115 suggests convincingly that the reference to the peacock in line 102 (and later at 269) is best explained as a reference to the circular markings used to create the impression of plumage on the actor's bodysuit, as clearly evidenced on the Naples and Atlanta vases (Figures 30 and 31).
- 73 I take πτερὰ to refer to wings in particular, as they do most commonly throughout the play (Dunbar 1995: 166).
- 74 For the laughter inspired by a character's appearance, cf. Heracles' reaction to Dionysus at *Frogs* 42–6.
- 75 Sommerstein 1987: 206 on lines 105–6 notes that “the object of this statement is ... to explain and excuse the fact that the bird costumes used in the play will make little or no attempt to represent body plumage realistically.” Dunbar 1995: 167 attributes the incorrect molting season to “faulty observation or (more probably) to comic assimilation of feather-shedding to leaf-shedding of trees.” Slater 2002: 135 suggests that lines 105–6 allude to the ill effects that winter storage has had on the Tereus costume that Aristophanes has gotten cheaply on loan.
- 76 Dunbar 1995: 162 notes the paratragic qualities of verse 94 in meter, structure, and vocabulary. For the anastrophic questions cf. *Thesm.* 136–40 (quoted from Aesch. *Lycourgeia*) and *Frogs* 47–8.
- 77 Dobrov 1993: 192–7, 202, 210; Slater 2002: 134–5.
- 78 Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy 2006: 191. Sommerstein 1987: 205 and Dunbar 1995: 164–5 both also dismiss the possibility that transformation into a hoopoe is the indignity to which Tereus says he was subjected in Sophocles. On Sophocles' *Tereus*, see also Fitzpatrick 2001.
- 79 It is now generally agreed that the fragment, which is attributed by Aristotle (*HA* 633a 18–27) to Aeschylus, belongs to Sophocles' *Tereus*; see Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy 2006: 189–90.
- 80 It seems like special pleading not to take ἀποδηλώσας ἔχει to mean “he has revealed.” Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy 2006: 191 argue that this phrase “does not require us to suppose that the transformed Tereus, or anything representing him, was visible on stage ...; Greek verbs meaning literally ‘reveal (as)’ sometimes in practice mean no more than ‘make, render’ (cf. LSJ *apodeiknumi* II 2).”
- 81 Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy 2006: 253.
- 82 Dobrov 1993: 190: “Thus, beyond his transformation from man into bird, Tereus undergoes further and extensive metamorphosis from a tragic character into a comic character at the hands of Aristophanes.”
- 83 Soph. *Tereus* fr. 581.4–8:

ὃς ἦρι μὲν φανέντι διαπαλεῖ πτερὸν
κίρκου λεπάργου· δύο γὰρ οὖν μορφὰς φανεῖ
παιδὸς τε χαυτοῦ νηδύος μιᾶς ἄπο·

νέας δ' ὀπώρας ἥνικ' ἄν ξανθῇ στάχυσ,
 στικτή νιν αὖθις ἀμφινωμήσει πτέρυξ·

Who, when spring appears, will spread the wing
 of a white-feathered hawk; for he will show two forms,
 his own and his child's, from one womb;
 and when, during new harvest, the grain is threshed,
 a dappled wing again will cover him.

- 84 Wings allow one to escape a tragic performance, according to the chorus (787–9; Slater 2002: 139).
- 85 The word *πτερά* appears only twice before the parabasis, in comparison with twenty-two times from the parabasis until the end of the play. Other words related to wings show a similar pattern, though not quite as skewed. Of the 47 other *πτερ-* or *πτην-* roots in the play (e.g., *πτερόω*, *πτεροέντα*, *πτέρυγος*), only twelve occur before the parabasis; two of these refer to loss of feathers/wings (*πτερορρυεῖ* in 106 and 284), and another four are densely clustered (572, 573, 574, 576) in Peisetaerus's attempt to convince the chorus that the birds can be taken for gods even though they have wings.
- 86 Lawler 1942 argues convincingly that each of these four birds performs a particular dance associated with its bird name. For the position of the birds onstage, see Dunbar 1995: 229–31.
- 87 See Dunbar 1995: 242–56 on the identifications of each of the birds.
- 88 Dunbar 1995: 244.
- 89 Admittedly, wings are also part of the attack in 345, but in a much more subordinate role.
- 90 Cp. *Ach.* 1095–1142 for the parallels between military and culinary equipment.
- 91 Dobrov 1993: 192, 226, 1997: 111–15; Slater 2002: 136–8. The association of bird costume with military attire had already been introduced with the appearance of Tereus's *trilophia* in 94 (Dunbar 1995: 162) and is repeated at 1364–9.
- 92 Sommerstein 1987: 239–40 notes that the adjectives in line 668 make it clear that Procne is being admired “as a woman, not as a nightingale.”
- 93 Three main possibilities have been proposed: First, the actor who plays Procne is fitted with a bird's beak and mimes the action of the official *auletes*. This is the position of Stone 1981: 357; Dunbar 1995: 421–2; and Taplin 1993: 106–7. Second, the actor who plays Procne not only mimes the official *auletes* but is also equipped with his own double pipes and *phorbeia* in lieu of a beak. This was proposed by Romer 1983 and followed by Sommerstein 1987: 240. Third, the official *auletes* himself, somewhat raunchily tricked out as an *auletris*, plays the role of Procne. This view is espoused by Barker 2004, who seems to have persuaded Sommerstein 2001: 294. An anonymous reader for the press suggests a fourth option, that the *auletes* performs the role of Procne in the typically elaborate robe of an *auletes*, and in that garb is likened to a female. My own view, argued in Compton-Engle 2007, is for the first option.
- 94 Compton-Engle 2007. A full-face comic mask much more closely resembles an eggshell than does the straplike *phorbeia* that Romer 1983 and Barker 2004 propose. Compare the masks of the Naples and Atlanta birds (Figures 30 and 31); the masks of the Naples birds have been described by Green 1985: 117 n. 45 as “remarkably egg-like.”
- 95 In *Birds* the noun *ὀβελίσκος* occurs only in these two scenes (359, 388, and 672). Romer 1983: 136 n. 5.
- 96 While our text does not make it explicit that Euelpides succeeds in removing Procne's mask (Dunbar 1985: 424 rules οὕτω in 674 inconclusive), there is no compelling reason to believe that he does not (pace Romer 1983: 137 n. 8, Sommerstein 1987: 93). As we have seen in Chapter 2, oglers in Aristophanes are normally gratified with physical contact, particularly with female entertainers (e.g., the two dancing girls at *Ach.* 1197–1221, the flute girl in *Thesm.* 1172–98). Sommerstein 2001: 294 notes that if the mask is removed, the joke is on Euelpides, since he would find himself about to kiss a man.

- 97 The attribution of speakers is, as so often in *Birds*, problematic. Both Dunbar 1995 and Sommerstein 1987, as well as Wilson 2007, give the exclamations to Peisetaerus and the aggressive desire and action to Euelpides. A reversal of these roles would have Peisetaerus doing the costume manipulation, consistent with his control of costume throughout the play.
- 98 Likewise, references to gaping and biting all but disappear once the parabasis begins: forms of χάσκω six times before the parabasis (including χασμήματος in 61), once afterward; forms of δάκνω three times before the parabasis, once afterward.
- 99 Whitman 1964: 181 states, “The accession of wings marks the first stage of Peithetaerus’ conquest of nature,” but, as I have argued, his dominance over props and costume has already begun several hundred lines earlier.
- 100 While the control of costume was shared by both Peisetaerus and Euelpides in the first portion of the play, Peisetaerus alone runs the show in the second half. Euelpides leaves stage at 846 and never returns.
- 101 In the initial encounter with the bird chorus, Euelpides tells Peisetaerus that he should maintain a beak (χρὴ ῥύγχος βόσκειν σε τὸ λοιπόν, 479) in order to take over sovereignty from Zeus. But as the beaks fade in importance and wings gain prominence, the necessity of acquiring beaks is forgotten.
- 102 Slater 2002: 140.
- 103 The attention paid to the patent artificiality of their costumes makes it hard to accept the emphasis of Rothwell 2007 on the role of nature in Peisetaerus’s transformation: “With his altered physical form nature can catch up with artifice” (158) and “even the intervention of a human being, Peisetaerus, is ‘made’ natural when he grows wings” (175).
- 104 Dunbar 1995 and Sommerstein 1987 agree that the addressee here is the slave and not, as the scholia suggest, the priest.
- 105 Hays 1994, noting (21) the parallel between πάντως δέ μοι ῥιγῶν δοκεῖς in *Birds* 935 and κάρτα γὰρ κακῶς ῥιγῶ in Hipponax fr. 32. The interaction of Odysseus and Eumaeus also raises the possibility, realized in *Birds*, that the addressee would offer the shirt off of someone else’s back, not his own; Odysseus tests “whether [Eumaeus] would strip off his cloak and offer it, or would order another of his companions (to do so)” (*Od.* 14.460–1).
- 106 On Peisetaerus as *didaskalos*, see Dobrov 1997: 111–15 and Slater 2002: 137–9. Contrast *Acharnians*, where Dicaeopolis seems to represent the comic poet but also takes on the persona of a beggar demanding clothing.
- 107 εὐδαιμον φύλον πτηνῶν / οἰωνῶν, οἳ χειμῶνος μὲν / χλαίνας οὐκ ἀμπισχνοῦνται.
- 108 Slater 2002: 140.
- 109 ἀλλ’ ὥς τάχιστα σὺ μὲν ἰὼν τὰς ἀρρίχους / καὶ τοὺς κοφίνους ἀπαντας ἐμπύμπλη πτερῶν / Μανῆς δὲ φερέτω μοι θύραζε τὰ πτερά.
- 110 ταυτηνδὶ λαβὼν / τὴν πτέρυγα καὶ τοῦτ’ ὅ πλῆκτρον θῆτέρᾳ, / νομίσας ἀλεκτρυόνος ἔχειν τονδὶ λόφον, / φρούρει, στρατεύου, μισθοφορῶν σαυτὸν τρέφε.
- 111 For the former interpretation, see Sommerstein 1987: 159; for the latter, Dunbar 1995: 659. As Dunbar notes, the dispute over these lines goes back at least to the scholia.
- 112 The metaphorical sense of ἀναπτερόομαι had already been used in passing at lines 432–3.
- 113 Whitman 1964: 193. Slater 2002: 145: “He claims that his language is ‘performative’ language, and in doing so he literalizes metaphor in a typically Aristophanic fashion: he has been creating citizens for the bird city by language, and the city is a city of language.” See note 68 in this chapter for further examples of critics who privilege the verbal elements in this play.
- 114 See Chapter 3 on the proper draping of *himatia*.
- 115 While he is offstage, Peisetaerus must arrange the χλανὶς γαμικὴ around the wings that he is still wearing, for in his parting words Peisetaerus asks Basilea to take hold of his wings (1760–1).

6. CONCLUSION

- 1 See the collection of essays in Boshier 2012, especially Dearden on Sicilian comedy.
- 2 For a recent analysis of tragic costume, see Wyles 2011.
- 3 For more examples of the symbolism conveyed by tragic attire, see especially Wyles 2011: 61–94. Wyles also considers the foreign associations created by the long fitted sleeves (80–1).
- 4 See, e.g., Cawthorn 2008.
- 5 See Green 2006 on the phallus.
- 6 *MNC*³ 1–51. See also Bernabò Brea and Cavalier 2001 for the terracotta evidence from Lipari; for a reconsideration of the Pollux passage on masks, Poe 1996.
- 7 E.g., Brown 1987; Wiles 1991 is predominantly about the mask, but see pp. 188–208 on costume.
- 8 As noted by Webster, Green, and Seeberg in *MNC*³ p. 4.
- 9 Green 1997; Hughes 2012: 158–61.
- 10 Marshall 2006: 56–66 is an excellent starting point on costumes in Roman comedy.

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